

CONTENTMENT IN “SONGS OF THE GORILLA NATION: MY JOURNEY
THROUGH AUTISM”: A HUMANBECOMING HERMENEUTIC STUDY

A Dissertation Presented

By

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DEDICATION

To my husband and best friend Michael, whose love and support made it possible for us to move across the country to pursue my dreams; our daughter Megan, who was there when the MMM Great American Adventure began; our son Joseph, whose love and encouragement was always only a phone call away; our son Joshua, who was able to share the experience through his own doctoral adventure; and my son Benjamin, who was always willing to remind me about the biochemical and molecular aspects.

... and most specially, to my sister Joan and dear friend Carrie, who through their loving presence and beautiful example showed me how to find contentment in arduous situations.

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ABSTRACT

CONTENTMENT IN “SONGS OF THE GORILLA NATION: MY JOURNEY THROUGH AUTISM: A HUMANBECOMING HERMENEUTIC STUDY

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Contentment is a universally lived experience that is inexplicably intertwined with health and quality of life. The aims of this humanbecoming hermeneutic study were to identify the essence of the experience of contentment, to contribute to knowledge about humanbecoming, and to contribute to the knowledge base of nursing. The source of data collection was the text of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism*. Through a hermeneutic process of discoursing with penetrating engagement, interpreting with quiescent beholding, and understanding with inspiring envisaging the structure of the lived experience of contentment was illuminated in the text. The finding is that *contentment is enduring serenity unfolding with inspiring unburdening as cherished convictions arise amid disharmony*. This finding is comprised of three core concepts: *enduring serenity, cherished convictions, and inspiring unburdening*. This answers the research question: What is the structure of the lived experience of contentment as described in the text of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: Living with Autism*. The findings are

discussed in relation to how they enhance understanding of contentment and humanbecoming and how they can inform practice and future research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of what you already has (Anonymous)

Nurses are in a fortunate situation to bear witness as people make important decisions regarding their health and quality of life. From a humanbecoming (Parse, 2007, 1998) perspective contentment arises with the decisions people make based on their values and beliefs. Contentment is assumed by Parse (2001) to be a universally lived experience that is inexplicably intertwined with health and quality of life. In other words, the meaning of health and quality of life is structured and expressed through the decisions each person makes and the manner in which that person expresses self: “Humans with universe structure personal meaning from infinite possibilities, cocreating paradoxical patterns with hopes and dreams known explicitly-tacitly only in the moment” (Parse, 2007, p. 217).

Phenomenon of Concern: Contentment

Parse (2001) described contentment as “a satisfying calmness amid the arduous as resolute liberty arises with benevolent engagements” (p. 200). Contentment can arise as people make decisions that contribute, not only to their health, but to their contentment with the situations they live with, and consequently, their quality of life. Scholars from various disciplines, such as behavioral science (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1985), social science (Allardt, 1993), theology (Herbart, 2001); medicine (McNair, 1996), and nursing (Nillson, Ekman, Ericsson, & Winblad, 1996; Parse, 2001; Steeman, Godderis, Grypdonck, de Bal, & de Casterie, 2007) have related contentment to quality of life. However, most of this work on contentment has been explored using quantitative

research methods (for examples see: Adams, 1969; Chen, 2001; Chou & Chi, 1999; Diener, 1994; Diener & Diener, 1995; 1996; Diener, Lucas, Oishi, & Suh, 2002; George, 1981; Grac, 1971; Hong & Duff, 1994; Hong, Bianca & Bollington, 1993; Hong & Giannakopoulos, 1994a; 1994b; Knapp, 1976; Krause, 1993; Larson, 1978; Lavallee, Hatch, Michalos & McKinley, 2007; McCulloch, 1997; McNair, 1996; Neurgarten, Havighurst & Tobin, 1961; Pinquart & Sorensen, 2001, Ryf,, 1989a; 1989b; 1989c; Ryf & Keyes, 1995; Schimmack, Diener & Oishi, 2002; Westerhoff, Dittmann-Kohli & Thissen, 2001), which by necessity requires a certain degree of reductionism. One limitation of reductionistic methods is that their use impedes understanding of the unique and highly personal experiences of individual human beings, some of whom live with extraordinary challenges and situations. The structure of contentment is a unique creation that is continuously evolving and being recreated through personal experience and perspective as the human with universe lives the past and future all-at-once in the now moment. This simultaneity view of human phenomenon is consistent with the humanbecoming school of thought (Parse, 2001).

Purpose

The specific focus of this study is to uncover the meaning and structure of the phenomenon of contentment as it is described by Dawn Prince Hughes in her autobiography, *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism*. The overall purpose of this study is to develop a greater understanding of the phenomenon of contentment in order to contribute to the foundation of humanbecoming knowledge as well as the knowledge base of nursing.

Significance for Nursing

“The experience of contentment is important to human health and quality of life” (Parse, 2001, p. 183), and therefore is important to nursing. Contentment is a universally lived experience that has been examined primarily through quantitative means founded on health related disciplines other than nursing. Exploring the structure of contentment through a humanbecoming perspective provides further understanding of the experience from an individual perspective as it relates to health and illness. As the ontology and epistemology of nursing is the individual perspective of health and illness, this study builds on the foundation of nursing knowledge.

Nursing guided with the humanbecoming school of thought does not impose health care decisions on individuals. Humanbecoming scholars believe that humans have the right to make their own health care choices; they have the right to make their own decisions regarding how they live health and quality of life. The freedom to make self-determined health care choices and live the ongoing consequences of those choices leads toward living contentment in one’s own situation or not living contentment. The important thing is that each individual makes his or her own decisions and determines how to live his or her own quality of life. Quality of life is the focus of the humanbecoming theory: “When quality of life is the goal of healthcare, the art of humanbecoming (illuminating meaning, synchronizing rhythms, and mobilizing transcendence) is lived with the principles (structuring meaning, cocreating rhythmical patterns, and cotranscending with possible) as guides, thus human freedom and dignity are in the forefront (Parse, 2007, p. 217).

Nursing Perspective

The researcher's stance for this study is the humanbecoming school of thought (Parse, 2001; 2008). The foundation of the humanbecoming school of thought is that human and universe are a unified mutual process that is inseparable, unpredictable, and continuously changing (Parse, 2007). Humans are open beings. Humans are free to make choices in their situations, free to choose meanings in their situations, and accept responsibility for the choices they make as they coexist with the humanuniverse process (Parse, 2007; 2008).

Humanbecoming is an existential phenomenological philosophy consistent with the ontological and epistemological assumptions that describe nursing's view of the humanly lived experience of health and illness (Parse, 2001). The school of thought is underpinned with certain assumptions regarding the meaning, rhythmicity, and cotranscendence of the human experience, which together describe the manner in which humans choose the quality of life they live (Parse, 2007).

The humanbecoming theory provides the framework to guide this study. The principles of the humanbecoming theory emerge from the major assumptions of the humanbecoming school of thought. The principles, concepts, and paradoxes of the theory will guide the findings of this study (Table 1).

Humanbecoming is a continuous process or journey that evolves as humans choose from illimitable possibilities to structure meaning in their situations, cocreate rhythmical patterns of relating with the humanuniverse process, and transcend with ideas of possible options for more choices (Parse, 2007; 2008). Cocreating reality is a seamless symphony of becoming (Parse, 2008). In the language of the humanbecoming school of

thought, humanbecoming and humanuniverse are paradoxical processes that evolve with the explicit-tacit value priorities that occur all-at-once in speaking-being silent and moving-being still, while enabling-limiting connecting-separating.

Contentment as talked about in the Text of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism* is explored in this hermeneutic study from a humanbecoming perspective to provide new insights into the human struggle to live contentment with the context of challenging situations. The author of this study dwelled with the existing literature, aesthetic representations of contentment, personal and professional nursing experiences of cherished beliefs, close and not so close others, and fellow nurses. Contentment emerged as a flowing paradoxical rhythm of life as humans freely make choices that determine their experience of contentment and quality of life.

Principle 1: Structuring meaning is the imaging and valuing of languaging

(Parse, 2008a, p. 1)

The first principle of humanbecoming asserts that humans structure their own reality and meaning for health and quality of life. The meaning that is chosen evolves through choices that are made. The choices are affected by value priorities; both values that are discretely inherent in human nature as well as values that are out in the open and clearly defined (explicit-tacit). Choosing takes place all-at-once, or every moment of every day. The choosing that takes place in one moment affects the outcome of the next moment and all moments in the future. It also affects all future choosing. In another words, people choose how they get to be who they are. Each individual person is the author of who he or she becomes as a human being through the process of cocreating self with the universe, which of course is humanuniverse, an inseparable unity of human and

universe. Individuals also choose the meaning of who they are; they don't give meaning to a moment or experience; they already are the meaning. The meaning is in the moment. Through reflection, the individual does not find meaning or give meaning to a moment or experience; the meaning is illuminated.

Imaging.

Meaning is already with the individual in the moment (Parse, 2008). It is the “reflective-prereflective coming to know the explicit-implicit all at once” (Parse, 1998, p. 36). The structured meaning that an individual creates in situations is shaped through and with the reality that the individual cocreates for self. This structured meaning and reality is referred to as imaging; the image of reality that structures the meaning that any experience or situation has for an individual (Parse, 1981; 2001; 2008).

The situation of contentment that an individual creates for self is shaped through the individual's reality and view of contentment and includes what is known as well as what is not known. The reality of contentment that the individual cocreates with the universe evolves moment to moment with the choices that are made and the consequences that are lived.

Valuing.

Valuing occurs as a paradoxical decision making process involving confirming-not confirming the illimitable notions and ideas that are available for choices to be made. It is a continuous process of thinking about the situation of the moment, thinking about all of the options and ideas related to the situation, weighing out the consequences of the choices, and deciding whether or not each option will offer the desired consequences, or even whether the consequences are worthy of any future consequences. Valuing emerges

with the humanuniverse process and is shaped with the individual's worldview (Parse, 1981; 2008).

Humans structure their own contentment. Value is placed on certain ideas, notions, and options as they relate to situations. Choices are made moment to moment that confirm and do not confirm the values that are chosen and expressed. The consequences of those choices determine the structure of contentment, or the reality that is contentment for the individual.

Languaging.

Languaging is the cocreated images the individual chooses to apply to the situation or experience as reality evolves. The cocreated image is symbolized. The symbolization and languaging emerges through the humanuniverse process, is shaped through the individual reality, and is culturally affected. Symbolization is the way that humans share their unique reality with others through such modes as movement and speaking. Movement and/or speaking involve verbal and non-verbal symbols that occur simultaneously, such as eye contact, facial expression, body posture, tone of voice, and words that are used. It is the rhythmical pattern of symbolization that unfolds into the languaging of experience and meaning.

The manner in which contentment is languaged reflects the meaning that contentment holds for the individual. This includes what is said as well as what is not said, and what is expressed as well as not expressed through body language. It is how the human expresses self and either shares or does not share thoughts and meanings with others (Parse, 1981; 2008).

In harmony with the first principle of humanbecoming, contentment is a value priority that is confirmed-not confirmed from what is explicitly and implicitly known.

Principle 2: Configuring rhythmical patterns of relating is the revealing-concealing and enabling-limiting of connecting-separating (Parse, 2008, p. 1)

The second set of concepts and paradoxes that are woven with the humanbecoming principles include revealing-concealing, enabling-limiting, and connecting-separating. As individuals establish value priorities there is a developing rhythm of humanuniverse and humanbecoming. The rhythmical patterns flow forward with time and continuously reflect the increasingly complex values of the individual and meaning of experiences. The increasing complexity results from the absorption and affect of the meaning, value, and consequences of all previous experiences and affects the meaning, value, and consequences of the present and all future experiences. One facet of the complexity involves the paradoxical nature of rhythmic patterns of relating; which although are complementary, are lived all at once in a situation (Parse, 1981; 2008).

Revealing-Concealing.

Pattern development, or how we go about planning our lives, involves being open about some aspects of self and hiding other aspects. This process of revealing-concealing occurs all-at-once; people disclose some things while at the same time hide other things. This paradoxical process has something to do with how the individual knows the self, as well as with how much the individual is willing or able to share openly. It is not possible for an individual to know everything there is to know about self. It is also not possible for an individual to be able to express every single detail about the self (Parse, 1981; 2008).

As individuals make choices regarding contentment, they are open to and aware of how some aspects of self contribute toward contentment. At the same time, there are aspects of self that the individual is not aware of that also affect contentment. The paradoxical process of revealing and concealing all aspects that shape contentment is greatly influenced by the individual's awareness of self with the universe, or how the individual views and lives contentment.

Enabling-Limiting.

Another facet of revealing-concealing has to do with making choices. As the individual makes a choice to move in one direction, it limits the possibility of moving in another direction. One choice always limits or inhibits another choice (Parse, 1981; 2008).

As choices toward contentment enable one decision, they limit others. It is not possible to enable all possibilities at once. Contentment is an ongoing forward movement of choices and consequences.

Connecting-Separating.

Connecting-separating is inevitably linked with enabling-limiting. As an individual makes a choice to move forward with a decision, he or she connects with the experiences surrounding that decision. At the same time, the individual is separated from the choices that were not included.

As the individual connects with the experience of contentment, the opportunity arises to dwell with the experience, integrate thought, and illuminate meaning and relationships with other experiences. This enables the experience of contentment to be dwelled upon to become more complex. The chosen experience of contentment limits the

growth of the experiences of contentment not chosen. The individual becomes further separated from the experience not chosen. Being connected to a chosen experience of contentment and being separated from another experience of contentment is a continuous rhythmical process. This ongoing connecting-separating rhythm of contentment is characteristic of humanuniverse and humanbecoming (Parse, 1981; 2008).

In harmony with the second principle of humanbecoming, contentment is revealing-concealing what is enabling-limiting while connecting-separating all-at-once from what is revealed-concealed.

Principle 3: Cotranscending with possibles is the powering and originating of transforming (Parse, 2008, p. 1)

The third set of concepts and paradoxes that are woven with the principles include powering, originating, and transforming. Humanbecoming is a process of transcendence and transformation that occurs with the structuring of meaning in life experiences, the shaping of new patterns of relating, and finding new ways to view the illimitable possibilities for decision making. People do not live alone in the world; they coexist with each other in continuous unity with universe. There is no way to isolate oneself and the affects of others. There is also no way to isolate oneself from the world. Being open to others and the affects they have on decision making involves working together with those we coexist with. The way in which humanuniverse, or individuals in existence with universe, move forward in a more complex and diverse manner, being open to all of the illimitable possibilities there are, and choosing meaning for self, is called cotranscendence (Parse, 1981; 2008).

Powering.

Humanuniverse is in continuous movement forward with time. This is inevitable. As individuals move forward, they do so with dreams and aspirations. Simple existence is referred to as powering. Powering is the energy that is the individual exchanging energy with the universe. The concepts and paradoxes that describe powering include pushing-resisting, affirming-not affirming, and being-nonbeing. These concepts describe individuals as being in a continuous state of affirming their own existence, as well as the possibility of their non-existence. This could mean dying, but it also means the risk of losing the self through rejection or not achieving expectations. Therefore, powering is more than being alive, it is the continuous push forward with the hope of achieving hopes and dreams; of moving toward the possibilities that the individual has chosen.

Humans push forward with the continuous hope of contentment. Pushing-resisting is the conceptual rhythm of powering that means the individual is pushing forward and resisting against adversity to fulfill choices that have been made to realize the hope of contentment. Pushing-resisting occurs with every human situation, often with moments of discontent. New possibilities are opened to the individual through these periods of discontent and contribute toward transcendence and humanbecoming. Powering is an essential structure of cotranscending with the illimitable possibilities available for decision making regarding contentment and is a foundation of humanuniverse transformation (Parse, 1981; 2008).

Originating.

Humanbecoming is a process of developing and evolving with humanuniverse. Individuals choose their way of being. Although there is a desire to be like others we

coexist with, there is also a desire to be unique. This conceptual description is referred to as conforming-not conforming.

As individuals move forward with the choices they have made to determine their contentment, they move forward with a certain degree of certainty and uncertainty. Certainty emanates from being clear in what one wants or chooses. Uncertainty emanates from not knowing for certain what the future holds, or what the consequences of decisions not made would have been. There is comfort and certainty in conforming; however not conforming is among the possible choices to be made. Contentment can be found in either conforming or in not conforming. Originating comes from transcending the paradoxes of certain-uncertainty and conforming-not conforming, and being open to imaging new possibles. Originating refers to the origination or beginning of transformation. The individual searches for a vision of what the transformation toward contentment will be like and what the consequences will be. The vision affects the decision the individual makes regarding contentment, if the individual will conform or not conform, or the level of certainty-uncertainty regarding the decision as a whole (Parse, 1981; 2008).

Transforming.

Transformation is an ongoing process of originating change with humanuniverse and cocreation of humanbecoming. Shifting worldviews evolve through discovery of what the future holds as the future becomes the now moment. This blending of now with future is a struggle to blend the familiar with the unfamiliar (Parse, 1981; 2008). Because nothing that is familiar is completely familiar, there is a certain degree of uncertainty

moving forward; and because paradoxically, nothing that is unfamiliar is completely unfamiliar, moving forward also holds a certain degree of familiarity (Parse, 2008).

The transformative blending of past and now with future involves continuously being open to new possibles regarding contentment. It involves weighing consequences, choosing, living consequences, and shifting worldviews while moving forward with time.

A characteristic inherent in moving forward is that one can never move back. Moving forward with a new insight regarding contentment means not being able to shift back to a previous way of viewing contentment. New insight transforms the individual's perspective and the meaning that is cocreated with contentment in the moment. The next moment holds a new insight that is shaped by the previous moment. Each new decision is based on the new situation of the now moment. New meanings shift worldviews and shift an individual's way of being as the view of contentment in each moment is continuously being transformed.

In harmony with the third principle of humanbecoming, contentment is the affirming-not affirming with certainty-uncertainty what is familiar-not familiar while conforming-not conforming.

The following paradoxical conceptual description of contentment emerged through the researcher's perspective guided through the lens of the humanbecoming school of thought: contentment is confirming-not confirming what is valued while connecting-separating in the moment to moment living that is certainty-uncertainty.

Research Question

What are the meaning and structure of the phenomenon of contentment as described by Dawn Prince Hughes in the text of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism*.

Summary

This chapter includes an introduction to the phenomenon of contentment and its importance to nursing. A conceptual description, shaped with the principles, concepts, and paradoxes of the humanbecoming theory describes contentment as confirming-not confirming what is valued while connecting-separating in the moment to moment living that is certainty-uncertainty. A review of the existing literature regarding contentment will be presented in the second chapter.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

Aristotle (1966) said we must begin with what is known to us in order to understand a thing in itself. Therefore, a review of the literature was performed to develop an understanding of what is known about contentment. The search term ‘contentment’ was entered into a wide range of databases, including Academic Search Premier, American Poetry Online, Art Abstracts, ATLA Religion Databases, the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Dissertation Abstracts International, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) , Google Scholar Beta, Music and Performing Arts Online, Philosopher’s Index, Psychological Abstracts (PsychINFO), PubMed, Social Science Abstracts, and Sociological Abstracts. The search was limited to articles in which contentment was a key word. The search was not limited by dates as the researcher was interested in gaining a temporal perspective of the phenomenon. Diverse sources of published literature were considered in order to gain a broad perspective of the use of the phenomenon. Articles were collected and read with the objective of expanding terminology related to contentment. Additional terms were identified in these articles and the databases were searched again using the following search terms: well-being, emotional well-being, subjective well-being, satisfaction, life satisfaction, happiness, and pleasure.

Contentment is a humanly lived experience that has been explored and discussed through multiple disciplinary perspectives. Consistent with the humanbecoming perspective, Parse reviewed the literature on contentment and found it to be “a

satisfaction, a chosen way of being with the moment that arises in the context of feeling satisfied-not satisfied with activities or endeavors that are cherished” (Parse, 2001, p. 183).

Contentment is derived from the French *contenter* and the Latin *contentus*, meaning contained or satisfied. The term was first identified in the literature in 1362 (Harper, 2001) and evolved from the term *content*, which means “constrained, limited, restrained, whence self-restrained, satisfied.” To be content is “having one’s desires bounded by what one has (though that may be less than one wished); not disturbed by the desire of anything more, or of anything different” (Murray, Bradley, Craigie, & Onion, 1961, p. 898).

“To one’s heart’s content” is a phrase that dates back to the sixteenth century to express that the contents of one’s heart is full. It is derived from Shakespeare’s *Second Part of King Henry VI*: “Her sight did ravish; but her grace in her words y-clad with wisdom’s majesty, Makes me from wondering fall to weeping joys; such is the fullness of my heart’s content” (Shakespeare, 1593/ n.d., p.601) and describes being pleased, to be satisfied, or have pleasure (Murray, et al., 1961).

“But godliness with contentment is great gaine” (1 Timothy 6:6-10) is a Biblical verse used to teach the value of satisfaction with what is necessary to survive and no more. This use of the term contentment has been used since the seventeenth century to describe satisfaction, or being satisfied (Murray, et al., 1961).

In addition to satisfaction, other words used to describe contentment in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) include pleasure, delight, gratification, pleasure, tranquility, and enjoyment. Contentment is a state of being satisfied; the action of gratifying to the

full, or of contenting by the complete fulfillment of a desire or supply of a want; satisfied or contented of mind; gratification or pleasure occasioned by some fact, event, or state of things; the satisfying of a need or desire as it affects or motivates behavior; release from suspense uncertainty, or uneasiness; removal of doubt, conviction.

What is contentment? Evidence based nursing begins with understanding the science that is the focus of our discipline, the perspective of the individual as that individual lives health and illness. In order to understand the perspective of the individual, it is essential to understand the basic human phenomena that describe human attitudes toward the experiences that are health and quality of life. Fear, hope, courage, suffering, waiting, having faith, and perseverance are some attitudes toward health and illness that are humanly lived experiences. Contentment is another humanly lived experience. Understanding contentment and being able to recognize the structure of contentment as it is humanly lived is an essential building block toward understanding the human science of the individual perspective of health and illness. This study of contentment has evolved from other humanbecoming studies that have discovered contentment as the structure of other humanly lived experiences, and it will contribute toward future studies that will focus on contentment as a component of specific situations and how to achieve contentment or measure contentment with those situations of health and quality of life.

This review is organized and presented according to literature derived from the fields of philosophy, theology, behavioral science, sociology, the arts, and nursing. Although organizing the literature in this reductionistic manner limits the ability to define such a complex and paradoxical phenomenon as contentment, it is necessary to provide a

clear understanding of the perspective through which various disciplines view the phenomenon.

Philosophical Literature

Words such as happiness (Flowers, 1957), pleasure (Carson, 1981; Flowers, 1957; Griswold, 1996), and satisfaction (Marshall, 2000, Shapiro, 2007) have been used throughout the philosophy literature to describe contentment at differing levels of abstraction. Aristotle stated that although happiness is not the ultimate goal or result in life, being happy does equate to an intrinsically good life. He also said that pleasure is experienced when one applies oneself completely in order to do the job well, requiring discipline of mind (Ross, 1966). Kant declared that the desire “to be happy is necessarily the wish of every finite rational being” (Kant, 1788a, p. 232) and argued that happiness is not necessarily the same as being content (Kant, 1788b). Nietzsche is in agreement that happiness and contentment are not the same (Nietzsche, Friedrich, Ecce, et al., 1969). In a similar vein, Griswold (1996) argues that tranquility is more closely related to happiness than it is to contentment, and Rosmini (1993) argues that although happiness, pleasure and contentment are related, pleasure and happiness occur in response to individual sensory desires. Contentment is on a different level and “pertains to the whole of human nature” (Rosmini, 1993, p. 11). Until recently, few philosophers have focused on understanding contentment as a distinct phenomenon, believing that contentment is simply one of a number of things that lead toward a good life (Carson, 1981; Griswold, 1996; Singer, 1936).

Happiness is viewed as a satisfaction or pleasure derived from the fulfillment of personal desires. It is short-lived based on an attitude or reaction to the pleasant affect a specific life circumstances offers in the moment (Flowers, 1957; Kant, 1798/1974; Rosmini, 1993; Shapiro, 2007; Veenhoven, 1991) as well as the gratification of the fulfillment of basic needs or desires, such as food, shelter, safety, companionship, esteem, and development (Bahm, 1968; 1972; 1974; Maslow, 1995). Because desiring and fulfillment of that desire are subjectively experienced, the happiness and satisfaction derived from fulfilling desires must also be a subjective state (Marshall, 2000). To determine a subjective state, such as happiness, pleasure, or satisfaction, requires reflection and contemplation on the individual attitude toward that thing which is desired. Contentment, or the feeling of being pleased (Carson, 1981; Flowers, 1957), requires neither such reflection nor contemplation on individual events (Griswold, 1996). Contentment is determined through reason (Kant, 1788a). “Since the bare form of the law can only be conceived by reason, and is, therefore, not an object of the senses, and consequently does not belong to the class of phenomena, it follows that the idea of it, which determines the will, is distinct from all the principles that determine events in nature according to the law of causality, because in their case the determining principles must themselves be phenomena” (Kant, 1788/1997).

Any determination of contentment as synonymous with happiness, pleasure, or satisfaction must be determined according to whether or not they exist at the same phenomenological level. Happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction are objects of the senses and are contingent on being happy or pleased by something (Flowers, 1957; Singer

1936; Kant, 1788b). They are appearances in the “inner sense” with “causality in the world of sense that ... conforms to the mechanism of nature” (Kant, 1788b, p. 232).

The feeling of happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction are “only subjectively valid and merely empirical, and [do] not possess the necessity which is conceived in every law” (Kant, 1788, p. 233). The feeling of happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction are “subjected to an empirical condition”, meaning the subjective desires and feelings of pleasure for each individual vary, consequently cannot be considered universal (Kant, 1788). “It is surprising that intelligent men could have thought of calling the desire of happiness a universal practical law on the ground that the desire is universal, and therefore, also the maxim by which everyone makes this desire determination of will” (Kant, 1788a, p. 235). The desire is aimed toward an object that is desired, and the consequentiality of the desire disqualifies it from universality.

It is critical for phenomenological researchers to remain consistent in scholarly utilization of conceptual and phenomenological criteria. “Consistency is the highest obligation of a philosopher” (Kant, 1788a, p. 231). Consistency in description is a moral obligation of the researcher to the philosophers who laid the groundwork for phenomenological knowledge development. For Kant, pure reason is the only means through which a phenomenon such as contentment can be determined. The use of the senses to determine a subjective feeling or attitude such as happiness, pleasure, or satisfaction with something desired disregards the use of pure reason, therefore discounts those feelings or attitudes from being considered principle phenomenon. Contentment, on the other hand, is not determined through the senses. It is determined through reason. Determination of a phenomenon through reason qualifies it as a principle phenomenon

and places it at the highest level of phenomenal abstraction, therefore separating contentment philosophically from happiness, pleasure (Kant, 1788a), and satisfaction.

Similar to the views expressed by philosophers discussed previously, Bahm (1968; 1972; 1974) describes contentment is one of four distinct intrinsic values that indivisibly comprise human experience. The four intrinsic values include pleasure, enthusiasm, satisfaction, and contentment.

Pleasure is paradoxical with feeling unpleasant and involves subtle pleasures, such as intellectual enjoyments, as well as pain and other uncomfortable feelings (Bahm, 1974). Pleasure includes both physical pleasure, such as gentle touch and massage, as well as feelings such as joy, elation, and satisfaction. Pain involves physical pain such as a pin prick or burn, as well as feelings of sorrow, depression, frustration, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. Everyone experiences the paradox of pleasure and pain; the meaning of pleasure arises most clearly in the face of pain. Some individuals experience a greater degree of pleasure and some experience a greater degree of pain. It would seem that those who favor of a greater sense of pleasure experience more happiness, joy, and contentedness, and those who experience a greater degree of pain experience more sadness, anxiety, and dissatisfaction and are less happy (Carson, 1981). However, the balance of pain and pleasure is affected by the individual's feelings toward particular situations as well as toward life as a whole. Individual dissatisfactions, such as suffering physical pain from a toothache, do not necessarily detract from a feeling of pleasure and contentedness about life as a whole (Carson, 1981).

Enthusiasm lies in desiring something. Desiring is a stimulating activity that is purposive and directed toward the future (Bahm, 1974). Desire is a matter of wants. We

desire what we want in order to satisfy our basic human needs (Gaskin, 1999). Obtaining what we want results in a subjective feeling of pleasure. Pleasure is a subjective attitude that varies from person to person and even within the individual from time to time. “It is in every man’s own special feeling of pleasure and pain that decides in what he is to place his happiness” (Kant, 1788a, p. 232).

Satisfaction lies on a continuum with frustration. Satisfaction is related with fulfillment of desire. Although frustration is related with lack of fulfillment of desire, satisfaction of desire can be equally frustrating as it kills enthusiasm (Bahm, 1974; Flowers, 1957; Gaskin, 1999). Frustration manifests in such feelings as hopeless yearning, fear, insecurity, anxiety, and anger (Bahm, 1974).

Some things, such as liberty, leisure, health, and peace contribute toward contentedness, simply because to not have them denies contentedness (Flowers, 1957). Other things, such as goods, merely seem to bring contentment (Flowers, 1957, Singer, 1936). Intrinsically, contentment is described as the pleasurable feeling of satisfied desire (Carson, 1981; Singer, 1936). Once an individual experiences contentment, that person attempts to avoid disturbing the contentment by controlling urges and desires. Attempts are also made to control pleasures and satisfactions that may lead to wanting more (Bahm, 1974; Carson, 1981; Flowers, 1957; Nietzsche, Friedrich, Ecce, et al., 1969). Because it is not necessarily possible to experience uninterrupted contentment, “one may then, practicing depth psychology, enjoy a deep-seated feeling of confidence of at-home-ness in the universe while relegating disturbing desires, satisfactions, frustrations, enthusiasms, pleasures and pains to surface phenomena. When one enjoys a profounder

level of contentment, he can endure his surface-level troubles with considerable disinterest or detachment” (Bahm, 1974, p. 85).

However, Nietzsche argues that this disinterest or detachment can keep people from realizing their utmost potential. When people are content with their lives they are pleased with the way things are and therefore do not desire or move to change their lives for the better. In this sense, being contented is not compatible with a good life (Nietzsche, et al., 1969).

Nietzsche’s criticism of contentment is based primarily on causal consequences of contentment without consideration of the intrinsic value of contentment. The intrinsic value of contentment has to do with positive contributions to the personal welfare of the individual. Contentment cannot take away from the individual’s quality of life. An individual can be contented with life in the present, even be perfectly contented with life in the present, and still hold aspirations for specific goals or aspirations in the future (Flowers, 1957; Singer, 1936). One might be contented their present level of communication skill or degree in nursing, but that does not indicate there is no desire to improve or make changes in the future. Being pleased or contented with one’s life contributes positively toward quality of life. Being contented is intrinsically good and enhances the intrinsic value of one’s life (Carson, 1981).

“Have we not, however, a word that does not denote enjoyment, as the word happiness does. But that nevertheless indicates a satisfaction with one’s existence, an analogue of happiness that must necessarily accompany consciousness of virtue? Yes! This word is contentment with oneself!” (Kant, 1788b, p. 234). Contentment, then, is an independence from the desires that drive us toward gratification of pleasure and

happiness. Desires and wants become burdensome, as they are always changing and growing, creating dissatisfaction with life the way it is. It is not possible to be completely free of desires and wants, however, it is possible to gain a conscious “mastery over one’s inclinations, hence of independence over them, and so to from the discontent that always accompanies them, and thus produce a ... satisfaction with one’s state, that is contentment” (Kant, 1788b, p. 235).

Theological Literature

Contentment is used throughout the theological literature as a term distinct from pleasure, happiness, or satisfaction. It is used to describe a goal achieved through some sort of a relationship with a spiritual being. The goal is achieved through following the specific teachings of various different religious foundations. The teachings of Buddhism, Christianity, and Judaism, although similar in some aspects, remain distinct in others.

Buddhism

“Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship” (Buddha)

Contentment is critical to the structure of Buddhism. Buddhism is both a philosophy and a religion. Approximately 2500 years ago, a young man of royalty named Siddhartha Gotama realized that his monetary goods and position in life were only temporary riches and did not bring him the contentment he desired. After spending six years studying and meditating, he finally found enlightenment, a state that made it possible for him to experience complete balance and harmony, resulting in perfect contentment. He spent his remaining 80 years teaching the path to enlightenment, or truth, which he called Dhamma (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

Dhamma includes four noble truths and the Noble eightfold path. The truths lead toward enlightenment and the desired goal of contentment. Contentment is described as a perfect harmony and balance free from anxiety, desires, and wants. The original nature of humans is a state of balance and harmony free from all anxiety, desires, and wants. However, humans are inherently discontented due to the basic needs that are necessary to sustain the system (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

Humans crave for things, both material and non-material. The craving and suffering stems from our belief in an independent self. In the Buddhist philosophy, the self is a false belief. What is recognized as the self is actually a continuously changing relationship of physical and mental energy that is only meaningful in relation to the immediate surroundings and circumstances. A belief that the self is a permanent independent being connects us to the material and troubling aspects of life, creating anxiety. In order to deal with the anxiety, we attempt to make meaning of experience and develop a better understanding of the world around us. Because there is no meaning in things or experience, we assign meaning to them. In this way we attribute characteristics and qualities with which we can bond and form relationships, thereby creating and fulfilling our desire for permanence (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

The characteristics assigned to things and experiences, and the relationship we form with them, creates a hierarchy. We come to value certain things, objects, ideas, individuals, and experiences more than others. This value system we invent creates a desire or craving for these things we have assigned a meaning and value to. We expect happiness and contentedness to result from these things; however, these things cannot give us permanent happiness or contentedness (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

We are often unable to have what we want, and this leads to frustration. Even if we would acquire what we want, our contentedness with it fades and we soon want something else. Additionally, it is not possible to control everything that goes on in the world around us. This leads to frustration as well. The lack of contentment that is often experienced results from erroneously placing meaning and value on things and experiences (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

Related to the process of assigning meaning and value to things and experiences is the process of assigning meaning to the self. Assigning meaning and value places the self in a hierarchy with other things, experiences, and humans and the same suffering and frustrations interfere with contentment (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

According to the Zen Buddhist philosophy, life began with nothing and ends with nothing. Freedom from suffering is possible through the relinquishing of value on things and experience. In that way we are free to experience the moment as it presents itself, free from excess; we are not separate from the universe but indivisibly intertwined. Humans, objects, and experiences all assume particular meanings through their context of being in relationship with each other. As soon as the context changes, the meaning, and therefore the significance, changes. When we are able to see things and experiences free from the context in which we place them, we can finally see them for what they really are; we can see them in a pre-reflective experience of transcendence. The enlightened person has shed value-placement, moves forward in the moment as an integral element of the situation, and sees the situation as it is with non-judgmental pre-reflective transcendence. The enlightened person, who is able to flow with the moment and see

things as they exist in a pre-reflective transcended state, is able to see things and live free of frustration and experience contentment (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

However, this enlightened state of flowing freely with the moment and seeing things and life through a pre-reflective transcended vision is not necessarily to be in touch with reality. If one were to actually be able to achieve this heightened sense of vision, maintaining it would put the very essence of contentment at risk. Contentment is freedom from the constraints of anxiety. The conscientious action of following the rules of enlightenment negates the freedom necessary to flow with the moment and be free and enlightened (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

Due to the basic needs necessary to sustain the system, perfect balance and harmony, free from wants and needs, is only attainable through death. Some living systems have been able to reach a momentary sense of enlightenment, but this balance and harmony is only temporary, as the pain that arises from not meeting basic needs ends into a descent into Dukkha, or dissatisfaction. Followers of Buddha continue to seek enlightenment of perfect harmony and balance as the ultimate path toward contentment (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

Christianity

“Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6)

Like Buddhism, contentment is critical to the structure of Christianity. According to Christian biblical theology, relationship with God is synonymous with contentment (Stewart, 2009). Unlike Buddhism, Christianity teaches that this contentment can be reached on earth through being content with one’s worldly goods as well as the situation with which one lives (Mathew, 2004; Stewart, 2009). Although Paul, an apostle of Jesus,

was imprisoned for his religious beliefs, and restrained from spreading the word of the gospel throughout the countryside, he was content that he was able to teach of the gospel to those in the prison with him: “Not that I speak of respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content” (Philippians 2:11). Paul learned to find what he had in prison to be sufficient to be content with, because he valued the presence of God over all else: “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me (Philippians 4:13) (Fite, 2007).

God will always provide what is necessary: “and having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:8). Similarly, God will guide you, no matter how difficult the situation is that one lives (Stewart, 2009) and no matter what circumstance is encountered (Mathew, 2004): “Let your conversation be without covetous, and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, or forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5-6). Through a relationship with Christ, sins will be forgiven and a life of eternity will be given (Mathew, 2004; 2006; 2008; Stewart, 2009). “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your soul. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew: 11:28-30).

To faithfully serve God is the greatest earthly achievement, for “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6). Contentment is the motivation to patiently serve God and earn eternal life in heaven: “To them who by patient, continuance in seeking contentment, seek glory and honor and immortality, in eternal life” (Romans 2:7). Contentment on earth can be learned if one puts faith in God to provide what is

needed: “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me” (Proverbs 30:8). He who is content in life will overcome the hardships which are to be endured on earth (Mathew, 2004; 2006; 2008; Stewart, 2009).

Judaism

“A joyful heart makes a cheerful face; a sad heart makes a despondent mood. All the days of a poor person are wretched, but contentment is a feast without end”
(Proverbs 15:13 and 15)

The Jewish and Christian faiths share some similar views of contentment, such as it being far greater to seek the riches of heaven than the riches of earth. Contentment lies in realizing what is truly necessary in life. Material possessions and goals do not lead to contentment. Contentment with what one has, rather than brooding over what one does not have or what one wants, allows the person to concentrate on learning the word of God (Kadden, 2001).

Two major teaching tools in the Jewish faith center on contentment. One of them is Samayach B’Chelko, which is one of the 48 Jewish virtues, or middah. Samayach translates to mean happiness, joy, or contentment; Chelko translates to portion or lot. When combined to read Samayach B’Chelko, the term refers to “contentment with one’s lot or portion” (Kadden, 2001, p. 1). According to Ben Zoma, a respected disciple, student, interpreter, and researcher of the Torah, the key virtues each person is expected to live by include wisdom, strength, wealth, and honor. Wisdom refers to learning that continues throughout life, strength refers to an individual’s unending triumph over temptation, honor refers to valuing not what is received, but what you are able to give,

and wealth refers to contentment (Botwinick, 2006). “Who is rich? Those who are happy with their portion” (Pirkei Avot 4:1).

The second teaching tool is the Menoras Hamaor (Abohav, 1982), a classic piece of Jewish literature that was written in the 14th century. Menoras Hamaor is composed of seven works, taken from the Talmud, each of which focuses on a distinct area of Jewish thought. The area of thought that Abohav (1982) focuses on in Menoras Hamaor is contentment: “If a person is content with what the Blessed Lord has graciously bestowed upon him, no matter if it is little or much, then he will have peace of mind; he will not brood over not having more than he does. Only then will he live out his entire life in riches, as it is written, the benevolent spirit shall become fat” (Meshlei 11:25). “A spirit that is content and delighted with whatever it has been blessed shall always be please, fat, and prosperous. Thus, the righteous man is always well provided for and is never lacking for anything” (Tehillim 35:25) (Abohav, 1982, p. 111-112). Therefore, individuals should look to God to provide what is necessary and must be satisfied with whatever has been given. Lust and discontent result from not being satisfied (Abohav, 1982).

Behavioral Science Literature

In the behavioral sciences, quality of life is a term that has been used to describe what individuals perceive as their well-being and happiness (Abrams, 2007; Herbart, 2001) and is often equated with contentment. It is believed that a goal of happiness and contentment motivates individuals to make certain choices regarding their quality of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1985); therefore, contentment is often measured with quality of life indicators. These indicators involve responses that measure an individual’s tolerance of their life circumstances.

For example, quality of life in one quantitative study examined how contentment was affected by a history of myocardial infarction paired with glucose tolerance. Interestingly, the incidence of coronary heart disease was found to be significantly associated with a lower level of contentment and vitality, especially among the patients who also experienced lower glucose tolerance (Agewall & Henareh, 2008). Although the researchers discovered that coronary heart disease did indeed affect quality of life, the question that remained unasked and unanswered was how quality of life was affected by any health related changes in the individual's life.

For example, one health related change individuals can make in their life involves participating in Hatha yoga. Chinese participants in one dissertation research experienced the role that Hatha yoga plays in ginong and its contribution toward experiential well-being. Ginong is the Chinese term for harmony of body, mind, and spirit. In this study, participants practiced hatha yoga in order to reduce stress and increase well-being. The participants reported improved mental clarity, increased energy, and a sense of freedom (Lord, 2002).

The Japanese people have a phenomenon similar to ginong which they refer to as yutori. Yutori is unique to the Japanese culture and is difficult to describe in the English language. It refers to psychological well-being, fulfillment, and satisfaction and contributes toward having a more positive perspective. Contentment is the central characteristic of yutori. Subjective perspectives on activities that promote enjoyment, behavioral freedom, and challenge are supported by the objective aspects of economic wealth, free time, and environmental amenities. In one study, yutori was measured on the Locus of Control scale, which addressed such questions as the individual's mental

comfort as well as fulfillment and satisfaction with past and present life. The study was undertaken as a result of the rapid economic growth and incredible work ethic of the Japanese people, in conjunction with their apparent lack of *yutori* (Yamashita, Yagi, & Furukawa, 2001). A Japanese phrase that describes a lack of contentment, well-being, or satisfaction with life is that “no *yutori* can be found in our daily life” (Yamashita, Yagi, & Furukawa, 2001, p. 225).

Hatha yoga and other methods to achieve *ginong* or *yutori* are choices people make in order to achieve contentment and improved quality of life. It is possible for individuals in any situation to make choices that lead toward increased quality of life and a sense of inner peace or contentment within their situation. From the Buddhist perspective, following the teaching of Buddha is a method to experience the “process of becoming” (Walsh, 2007, p. 471). Through the process of becoming, healing in any situation is made possible. Healing does not refer to being healed of the disease process. It refers to achieving the internal and external balance (Grac, 1971) that is expressed through the more spiritual terms of *ginong* or *yutori*. One study that focused on the less materialistic aspects of contentment looked at how losing a child creates an existential crisis leading to a search for meaning of “what it is to be human” (Ashton, 2007, p 19). Bereaved mothers developed a new perspective of self and life. Although they continued to maintain an enduring bond with the child lost, they were able to go on with the pain of the loss while developing a new enthusiasm for life, pride and confidence in self, and a sense of contentment with the new situation. The contentment was a process of searching for balance of pain and sadness with a newfound joy and passion for life (Ashton, 2007).

However, behavioral science focuses primarily on the material aspects of life that contribute toward contentment as happiness and satisfaction with the things in life. One Japanese-American study reported that being satisfied with one's financial security, being able to live and die at home, and to remain free from pain contributes toward contentment, making it possible to die a good death (Hattori, 2007). In an unrelated study, expatriates living as missionaries report that immersion in the new culture contributes toward greater satisfaction with the living situation, thereby contributing toward a greater sense of belonging and contentment (Edwardson, 2004). A review of behavioral science research revealed that the term 'satisfaction with life' is used consistently with 'subjective well-being' to describe contentment (Larson, 1978) and that a majority of the research involving all three terms is limited to responses guided by instrument parameters (Larson, 1978). One such instrument is the Generalized Contentment Scale (Hudson, 1982; 1990; 1992).

The Generalized Contentment Scale is part of the Clinical Measurement Package. The Generalized Contentment Scale is a five-point scale (rarely or none of the time through most or all of the time) designed to measure the degree, severity, and magnitude of non-psychotic depression (Hudson, 1982; 1990; 1992). Use of the Generalized Contentment Scale was found in five different studies, and in four of them the Scale was indeed used to measure the individual's level of depression or improvement in depressive symptoms (Courts, 2000; Griffin & Friedman, 1986; Harper, Richter, & Gorey, 2009; Robinson, Powers, Cleveland & Thyer, 1990). One study used the scale to measure subjective well-being (Dickey, Brown & Streckfus, 2002).

One group used the Scale as one of two instruments to evaluate depressive symptoms in males using propranolol. Patients with a positive family history of depression were found to have indicated higher depressive scores than patients without family history of depression (Griffin & Friedman, 1986).

Two separate groups used the Generalized Contentment Scale to measure the effectiveness of treatment programs to treat depressive symptoms. One of the projects involved two uncontrolled outcome studies that looked at clinically depressed children and adolescents who participated in inpatient psychiatric programs. The Scale indicated statistically significant improvements in the level of depression when the participants were involved in an inpatient program (Robinson, et al., 1990). The second group used the Scale to evaluate the effectiveness of a group treatment program on the depression and resultant eating disorders among adult female survivors of childhood sexual assault. The results of the study indicate that the treatment program was more effective for women who suffered from depression without eating disorders. Those who also suffered from eating disorders were likely to benefit from a more specialized treatment program (Harper, et al., 2009)

It is clear that each one of these studies used the Generalized Contentment Scale as an instrument to contribute toward the measurement of depression of various individuals in different situations. Although the Scale was originally designed to approach measurement of clinical depression, one group used it to study the subjective well-being of African American adults undergoing routine dental care. Depression was not the focus of the study. The focus was to measure the negative effect of dental treatment on a specific group of individuals. The Scale indicated there was no indication

of a negative effect of the dental treatment on the subjective well-being of the participants (Dickey, et al., 2002). The terms subjective well-being and psychological well-being are used interchangeably in this study.

Another instrument identified in the contentment literature is the Contentment Index. The Contentment Index is intended to measure participant's subjective well-being or satisfaction with life (Bloom & Blenkner, 1981; 1984). The uniqueness placed on the instrument is that it addresses the individual's subjective responses to health and happiness, rather than the participant's perceived usefulness in life (Bloom & Bleckner, 1984). Additionally, the Contentment Index involves ten questions that guide a probing structured interview. The questions are designed to evaluate the cognitive and emotional effects of long term care on chronically ill elderly persons in home care, day care, outpatient settings and sheltered housing, as well as the institutionalization effects of nursing home environments. Particular attention is paid to the evaluation of adjustment to environmental changes and life satisfaction (Mangen & Peterson, 1984).

One study was found in which the researchers used the Contentment Index as an instrument. Male nursing home residents were interviewed regarding their adjustment to living in a long term care environment. The residents reported a higher level of happiness and contentment when they were more independent in their cares; however, the longer the men were residents of long term care the lower their reported level of happiness and contentment (Reid, Haas & Hawkings, 1977).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale was developed to promote understanding of the construct of subjective well-being and satisfaction with life, and asks specifically how contented an individual is with their life (Diener, 1984; 1992; Diener, Emmons, Larsen,

Griffin, 1985). Ryf (1989a; 1989b; 1989c) contributed toward the development of a theoretical foundation for the construct of life satisfaction and the Satisfaction with Life Instrument evolved to measure six characteristics of well-being, including self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryf, 1989a). Ryf's research, along with Diener's, does contribute significantly toward understanding subjective well-being from a behavioral science perspective.

One study that involved the Satisfaction with Life Instrument and 116 university students in Russia revealed that students experience decreased subjective well-being when compared to 38 other countries with a similar gross national product (Balatsky & Diener, 1993). Through the unique nature of these findings, the researchers realized the importance that personal and cultural considerations play in determining life satisfaction, and subjective well-being. For example, a typical Russian individual would not consider responding positively to questions regarding their own individual well-being. It is not considered proper or safe to answer positively. It is typical Russian behavior to hide success in order to not tempt fate or to prevent envy on the part of another in comparison. Culturally, Russian people make an attempt to "level the fate of all" (Balatsky & Diener, 1993, p. 238). It is considered most appropriate for a Russian individual to look tired or unhappy. On the other hand, it is considered most appropriate in American culture to appear rested, happy, and healthy (Balatsky & Diener, 1993).

Some researchers who have used the Satisfaction with Life Instrument support its validity (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2001) others question additional factors that potentially contribute toward well-being (Balatsky & Diener, 1993), such as religiosity (Greenfield

& Marks, 2007; Junco, 2003; Larson, 1978; Krause, 1973; Patrick & Kinney, 2003), gender (Junco, 2003), race (Woody & Green, 2001), personality (Diener & Diener, 1995), culture (Klar & Giladi, 2008; Oishi, 2002; Olson-Madden, 2008; Yamashita, Yagi, & Furukawa, 2001), medical diagnosis (Junco, 2003; Robison, 2000), locus of control (Junco, 2003), participation in various activities (Diener, et al., 2002; Olson-Madden, 2008; Schimmack, Diener, Oishi, 2002), and age (Chen, 2001; Junco, 2003; Olson-Madden, 2008; Westerhoff, Dittmann-Kohli, & Thissen, 2001). Some researchers argue that more work is needed to develop the pattern of relationship between the constructs of subjective well-being and the constructs of life satisfaction (Diener, 1994; McCulloch, 1997) and others argue that a complex phenomenon such as satisfaction with one's life cannot be measured using a simple scale (Westerhoff, et al., 2001), as life satisfaction judgments change over time according to mood of the moment and criteria used to judge life satisfaction (Schimmack, et al., 2002).

The Contentment with Life Assessment Scale (Lavalley, et al., 2007) is a more recent development in attempts to understand people's "feeling of contentment, sense of fulfillment, and discrepancies between one's actual life and one's wants or aspirations" (Lavalley, et al., 2007, p. 205). Aligned with a Western perspective, the authors argue that "the greater the discrepancies between people's wants or desires and their current success at achieving their wants, the lower their satisfaction" (Lavalley, et al., 2007, p. 206). Questions, therefore, are directed at dissatisfaction in daily life in relation to mental health, stress, marital situation, and number of days in which the individual felt unwell. The instrument developers consider the respondents answers to these questions as a "global evaluation of one's life" (Lavalley, et al., 2007, p. 205). Two specific likert scale

questions include: “I am very content with my life” and “I am living my life to its fullest” (Lavalley, et al., 2007, p. 206).

Although the authors of the Contentment with Life Assessment Scale state their intention is to address affective or emotional aspects of life satisfaction in addition to cognitive aspects, all of the instruments described in this section of the review focus primarily on cognitive responses to life situations. Research that incorporates the Satisfaction with Life Instrument intentionally limits input of conditions of an individual’s life that have a potential emotional affect on well-being, as well as any cognitive processes that contribute toward understanding and determining why life is satisfying (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The instrument focuses specifically on what people have rather than how they feel about what they have (Lavalee, et al., 2007). Although subjective well-being and life satisfaction are terms used synonymously (Deiner, et al., 1985; Bloom & Blenkner, 1981; 1984; Lavalley, et al., 2007; Lykken & Tellegen, 1996; Mangen & Peterson, 1984; Pinquart & Sorensen, 2001; Reid, et al., 1977) in discussion of these instruments, the terms are at distinctly different phenomenological levels. These instruments seek, not to understand the constructs of life satisfaction, well-being, nor contentment, but how individual’s experiences in specific areas such as health, economics, relationships, recreation, religion, self-esteem, transportation, education, cultural activities, changes in life circumstances, and work (Michalos, 1991; Ryf, 1989b; 1989c) contribute toward such things as depression and anxiety. Depression and anxiety are medical diagnoses. They are medical situations that people live with. They are not humanly lived phenomenon. Contentment is a human phenomenon that exists at a level of abstraction that is only determined through reason (Kant, 1788a). Contentment cannot

be determined through reflection or contemplation (Carson, 1981; Flowers, 1957; Griswold, 1996; Kant, 1788a). Contentment as a phenomenon or humanly lived experience is distinct from contentment as described in conjunction with subjective well-being or life satisfaction.

Sociological Literature

Sociologists have studied happiness, satisfaction, contentment, and subjective well-being in relation to how each contributes toward quality of life. In particular, the sociology research focus has been on what sorts of activities or experiences affect contentment and quality of life. One study involving adults in British Columbia viewed contentment as a long term state of mind not dependent on any singular event. The researchers measured the impact of art related activities on perceived quality of life. Using the Prince George Exploratory Survey, the participants were asked questions regarding their general health, satisfaction with life, satisfaction with quality of life, happiness with life, contentment with life, and subjective well-being. The researchers discovered that art-related activities contribute little toward one's contentment and quality of life. The author's suggested perhaps they did not use the correct instrument to measure the contribution participation in the arts makes toward one's contentment and quality of life (Michalos & Kahlke, 2008). However, it is possible that one activity alone is not the issue; rather, the value should be placed on the attitude toward the time spent on the activity. Any pleasure derived from participation in any one activity is a momentary response. It could be that contentment is an evaluation of the overall life situation (Veenhoven, 1991).

Two studies involving religiosity also mirror the yogi view of *samtosa*. One group of hospice patients reported that their religiosity and relationship with God contributed toward a sense of satisfaction and contentment with overall life, consequently contributing toward acceptance of impending death (Ardelt & Lenzen, 2004). In an unrelated study, a group of Thai elderly from the Chai Nat province who are strongly influenced by the Buddhist tradition reported that overall they were contented with their lives. However, these same individuals reported that they received happiness from material things in their lives, such as nicer living arrangements and financial security. They felt particularly happy with their material situation when they compared themselves to those less fortunate surrounding them. It is interesting to note that those who reported a higher overall contentment also reported themselves to be happier with their material life (Gray, Rukunruaykit, Kittisuksathit, & Thongthai, 2008). The findings of this study, which appear to be at odds with traditional Buddhist teachings (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994), stress the importance of exploring further the distinction between momentary happiness and overall contentment, and how one relates or contributes toward the other (Veenhoven, 1991).

Additional studies support a distinction between happiness and contentment, and also support contentment being related to a “sense of belonging culturally” (Edwardson, 2004, p. 322). One group of researchers explored the emotional investment Western expatriate wives engaged in to develop an emotional transformation resulting in a feeling of contentment in their new situation. The women traded personal independence, careers and social lives to focus on their husband’s careers. Although expatriate women are expected to appear content with the leisure and prestige of their new lives, some failed to

adjust to their new situation and suffered from boredom, loneliness, and despair. Others were able to bond with women in similar situations, discover self-empowerment and self fulfillment, and experience an emotional transformation that enabled them to renegotiate the meaning of their new female identities. The women were able to find meaning and value in their new situations and truly experience the contentment they were expected to display (Arieli, 2007). Human interaction with other women in similar situations to their own contributes to the feeling of being understood and helps women to make meaning in their situations (Polkinghorne, 1988). The actual meaning of experience is shaped by how women interpret their experiences in relation to life as a whole (Chase, 1995).

Similarly, Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong looked to the families they were reunited with for support and understanding. Although young immigrants experience many hardships, difficulties, and unfavorable living conditions, through relationship, communication, and understanding from their families, they are able to focus on the more positive aspects and how those positive aspects affect their lives overall. Through focusing on the positive, immigrants are able to experience gratitude and contentment in their new situation (Lam & Chan, 2004).

Individuals living in lower income neighborhoods expressed similar reactions. When asked what contributes to satisfaction or dissatisfaction related to their neighborhood, they respond that the socio-residential situation in which they live is not as important as relationships with neighbors and how those relationships affect their lives as a whole (Shon, 2007).

Although certain African-Americans live with situations of economic, racial, and health related adversity (Johnson, 1995), these situations have little affect their

contentment with life as a whole (Woody, & Green, 2001). Relationships with others who shared similar values of heritage and race contribute toward shaping a shared perspective and contentment with life (Johnson, 1995; Woody & Green, 2001).

The overall theme of these sociological studies indicates that happiness is a temporary response to individual activities or experiences. Contentment is used as a descriptor in a different sense to describe a consequence or attitude toward the broad overall perspective of a collection of life experiences.

Arts Literature

The human strive for contentment has inspired considerable creative expressions. This desire has been expressed through art in many forms, including paintings (Gangelhoff, 2004; Sklar, 1999) pottery (Larson, 2008), drawings (Marsh, 1987), calligraphy (Wates, 2007), literature (Twain, 1899), and music (Dempsey, 2004).

Terry Pappas is an urgent care physician-artist who sees patients one day a week and spends the rest of her time painting pastel and oil landscapes that reveal the healing and meditative tendencies enhanced through caring for patients (Sklar, 1999). Expressing herself through art forms is a means for her to “connect” with herself (Sklar, 1999, p. 32) and experience “inner growth and contentment” (Sklar, 1999, p. 33) that assists in connecting with patients and their situations. Although it is not typical to blend pastels, Pappas uses her fingers to blend the colors as a sort of symbolic and therapeutic “laying of hand” (Sklar, 1999, p. 34).

Ewan Clayton is a calligrapher who depicts aesthetic and spiritual experiences in his collection entitled “Practicing Contentment.” Clayton’s revelation for this exhibition was realized during a meditative walk through a Zen Buddhist garden in Japan. As he sat

gazing into a fountain he realized the fountain itself was part of four Chinese characters that spelled out “my practice is only contentment” (Wates, 2007). As he peacefully sat in the rain watching the water spill over the fountain, he realized the feeling of contentment. Throughout the days and years to follow, Clayton became increasingly aware of a feeling of content and connection to his surroundings. Previously his calligraphy had been geometric and angular. He determined that he needed to unite his “body and mind in a much more harmonious way” (Wates, 2007, p. 18). Since his revelation, he allowed his contentment-environment connection to flow into his calligraphy, resulting in a more aesthetically pleasing piece that reflected the contentment he experienced. The more he expressed his contentment through his flowing calligraphy, the more he realized the art of living in the moment. His calligraphy took on a flowing connect between the meaning of the words and the artistic form of the calligraphy to shape them (Wates, 2007).

David Huang is a hollow-ware artist who, like Clayton, is able to create art forms through the “gestural expression of feeling” (Larson, 2008, p. 30). Huang modeled for classes in order to gain a better understanding of the postural and facial manifestation of expression. He created a hammered copper piece, aptly named ‘Contentment’, which depicts his method of hammering a piece of metal so that it is worked from the center out. The importance of working the piece from the center stems from the value that he places on the interior of the vessel. It is the center of a vessel that provides the functionality of the piece. Working the vessel from the center is an act of bringing the expression of the piece out from the center of the metal, or a physical and visual manifestation of the feeling of the art as it is being worked. Although the process seems to promote a thought of duality (Larsen, 2008), the inside of the piece would not exist without the outside

form, just as the expressive manifestation of the outer form would not be possible without the metal that was worked from the inner core. The piece is worked as a whole with the expression of the piece developing as an ongoing process. The manifestation of contentment continues forward with the interpretation of the observer.

Perhaps the most well known expression of contentment is in Mark Twain's literary work, *The Adventures of Huck Finn* (Twain, 1961). Twain uses land to symbolize tragedy and despair and water to symbolize feelings of contentment and timelessness. He assumes a Cartesian tension between body and mind, and a release of that tension as Huck leaves the confines of the shore for the freedom of the water. The land represents his suffering and the river is the peace, tranquility, and contentment he longs for. On the river he is free from the weariness, fatigue, worry, responsibility, work, and depression of spirit he suffers on the shore (Harris, 1980; Twain, 1961). Twain's depiction of contentment on the water is reminiscent of the brief glimpses of contentment that are described in the theological literature in relation to the elusive nature of the Buddhist perspective of contentment.

Although Paul McCartney has been criticized for the frivolous focus of his songwriting on shallow love lyrics, his overarching theme has been the "supreme contentment found in love of home, hearth, and family" (Dempsey, 2004, p. 27). Throughout the time he has been writing his lyrics, the world has been chaotic with war, unrest, revolt, tragedy, increasing rates of divorce, and skepticism. Through it all, McCartney expresses an overriding sense of peace and serene contentment (Dempsey, 2004):

Every morning brings a new day,
And every day that night is through.
But tonight I just want to stay in,
And be with you (McCartney, 1970)

Nursing Literature

Nursing is also varied in the manner in which contentment is discussed. Various studies explored contentment in relation to job satisfaction (Christiansen, 2004; Junious, Johnson, Peters, Markham, Kelder, & Yacoubian, 2004; Manchester, 1987; McCloskey, 1990), contentment as a health state for infants (Bryanton, 2007) and older adults (Kulla, Sarvimaki, & Fagerstrom, 2006), contentment as a short-term mood state in infants during bathing (Bryanton, Walsh, Barrett, & Gaudet, 2004), and contentment as a long-term state of mind requiring a transformation of thinking and viewing life (Bickerstaff, Grasser, & McCabe, 2003; Clancy & Svensson, 2007; Corchado, 2006; Goddard, 2004; Kiehl, Carson & Dykes, 2007; McKie, 2003; Ravari, 2009; Steeman, et al., 2007). One humanbecoming study explored the construct of the phenomenon of contentment (Parse, 2001) and eleven humanbecoming studies explored other phenomenon and found contentment to be a descriptive construct (Baumann, 2003; Bournes & Mitchell, 2002; Bournes & Ferguson-Pare, 2005; Bunkers, 2004; Hayden, 2007; Jonas-Simpson, 2003; Kagan, 2008; Parse, 1994; 1996; 1997; Smith, 2006).

Quantitative Nursing Research

One quantitative study was focused on the psychosocial adjustment of 14 patients and their dialysis partners on home hemodialysis. The Generalized Contentment Scale was one instrument used to measure depression and adjustment to the home program. The

Scale measurements indicated reduced depression in patients who were participants in home programs, therefore supporting the use of home hemodialysis programs with dialysis partners (Courts, 2000)

Qualitative Nursing Research

Primarily, contentment was explored through qualitative methods and was viewed in a manner equating to a long-term state of mind that requires a transformation in a way of thinking or viewing life. One study that was particularly meaningful was conducted using qualitative in-depth interviews to develop an understanding of the spiritual aspects of job satisfaction with 25 nurses in a government run medical center in Iran. A qualitative approach was used because the researchers realized the personal and cultural influences that affect perceptions of spirituality and job satisfaction. The nurses viewed their patients as celestial gifts; therefore feel a particular spiritual commitment to their patients and the care they give them. They spoke of helping their patients reach the level of “devotion in care” (Ravari, 2009, p. 23). Many nurses value the comfort of the patients more than their own comfort. This study emphasized that responses to individual incidents provide moments of happiness, pleasure, or satisfaction. However, contentment does not lie or emanate from individual moments; it is in the attitude toward these individual moments, and the general attitude toward providing comfort toward their patients as a form of worship that leads toward an overall attitude of contentment. Although the nurses found many moments in which they felt happiness or satisfaction with what they did, they had many more moments in which they experienced adversity.

What was particularly meaningful about this Iranian study in relation to the researcher’s own dissertation research is the authenticity and purity of the phenomenon of

contentment as described by the nurses. The authenticity and purity of contentment that is expressed by these nurses is possible through their intrinsic interconnectedness of spirituality, religiosity, and contentment. The nurses expressed contentment with nursing through satisfaction with the level of care they were able to provide with patients, to help patients to be content with the care they received, and by nursing others as a fulfillment of their relationship with God. Although these Muslim nurses experience more adversity and receive much lower physical compensation for the work than do nurses in other countries (Enami & Nasrabadi, 2007), they continue to express gratification and contentment with nursing (Ravari, 2009).

These findings support those from three earlier studies exploring similar issues with nurses. The first study asked six nurses in Utah to describe their spiritual connection with nursing. The nurse's stated that their spirituality enabled them to reach a depth of connection with their patients similar to the connection the Iranian nurses reached with their patients, resulting in contentment with their work (Getzlaf, 1996). The second study explored the commitment of holistic nurses to holistic methods. The nurses were able to incorporate holistic methods into their nursing care and find contentment in this new way of nursing by changing their view of nursing in relation to a holistic philosophy (McKie, 2003). The third study involved public health nurses in Norway and their sense of responsibility to patients. Lavina's philosophy of responsibility for Other was used to underpin the study. Lavina's philosophy is focused on the ethical demand on the other person, or the infinite responsibility for Other. The philosophy teaches that insights can be gained by listening to the Call of Other. Call of Other can be recognized through any manner of expressions, for example the disheveled appearance of an uncared-for elder or

the look of hunger in a child's eyes. The Call of Other requires a responsibility to come to the assistance of the Other. The Ethics of responsibility for Other involves five themes, including personal responsibility, boundaries, temporality, worry, fear, and uncertainty, and a sense of satisfaction. The sense of satisfaction the nurses in this study felt was described as feeling "most at home" while working with patients and "just listening to them" (Clancy & Svensson, 2007, p. 165). Satisfaction was expressed in some of the individual moments of patient care, and difficulty was described in other moments. However, contentment was expressed in the overall attitude toward nursing, despite the difficult moments. "Burdens of responsibility can give the nurse worries, but at the same time make her feel needed and increase her job satisfaction ... The nurses' contentment is not complete in the unpredictable; the demands of the unforeseeable contribute to making their jobs worthwhile" (Clancy & Svensson, 2007, p. 165).

Some studies described the transformation in resulting in a contented state of mind as a peaceful and accepting transformative way of viewing life in the midst of adversity. One hermeneutic phenomenological dissertation study focused on understanding more about the spiritual experience of women who had suffered and been transformed by a traumatic crisis. The women experienced two phases in the transformative process. The first involved emotional turbulence, suffering, and falling apart. The second phase involved searching for meaning, transforming, and transcending. Through the transformation process the women found peace, love, contentment, joy, trust, forgiveness, and compassion (Goddard, 2004).

Three studies involving adults later in life also focused on transformation from adversity to peaceful contentment. The adversity involved such experiences as death of a

spouse or loss of independence. These losses often result in the need to move from independent living in the family home into a long term care facility. Transcending these difficult transitions to find contentment is a result of looking back and discovering the meaning in their life (Bickerstaff, et al., 2003; Nillsson, et al., 1996). They realized that contentment is not a result of the material things accumulated throughout life (Nillsson, et al., 1996), it results from looking back and realizing their own personal growth and transformation (Nilsson, et al., 1996) as well as currently feeling valued, loved, cared for, and autonomous in decision making (Steeman, et al., 2007).

Three additional studies involving younger people reported a similar transformation from adversity to peaceful contentment. One involved young first time mothers and their adjustment to new motherhood. Despite the difficulties experienced in motherhood, such as issues with social support, economics, fatigue, lack of time for self, personal illness, and balancing work with home, the women were able to find peace and tranquility in moments of mothering their newborn infants and expressed an overall sense of contentment with their lives (Kiehl, et al., 2007). The second study involved individuals living with schizophrenia. Through participation in an integrative approach that involved medication as well as alternative therapies, the individuals were able to reinforce the realization of an interconnectedness of body-mind-spirit with all other things in the universe, at the same time they were feeling a certain disconnect from all of these things as a result of the physical effects of their illness; the individuals were able to achieve a sense of peacefulness and contentment amidst a prevailing sense of disconnection (Tarko, 2002). The third study involved Puerto Rican women scheduled for breast conservation surgery or mastectomy who participated in a preparatory program.

Using Roy's Adaptation Model to underpin the preparatory approach, the women were able to respond higher on the Derogatis Affects Balance Scale (mood instrument) in the areas of joy, contentment, vigor, and affection than woman who did not participate in the program (Corchado, 2006).

Humanbecoming Research

The humanbecoming school of thought provides an ontology, epistemology and methodology that are congruently linked and specifically designed to contribute to the knowledge base of nursing (Parse, 2001). According to the humanbecoming school of thought, people make choices in their moment-to-moment living that determine their meaning of health and quality of life. Parse (1996) explored quality of life with 25 people living with Alzheimer's disease. The structure of quality of life was found to be "contentment with the remembered and now affiliations that arises amidst the tedium of the commonplace, as an easy-uneasy flow of transfiguring surfaces with liberating possibilities and confining restraints, while desiring cherished intimacies yields with inevitable distancing in the vicissitudes of life, as contemplating the ambiguity of the possible emerges with yearning for successes in the moment" (Parse, 1996, p. 130). The participants compared their lives in the present moment to how they used to be. Although they struggled with the changing pattern of their now boring routines, they experienced contentment in the pleasant memories of their past and the appreciation they felt for their families and friends. They realized they lived with certain limitations, but also realized the many opportunities present to them and held onto the hope that they would remain safe as they became increasingly dependent on others for their care (Parse, 2001).

“Hope-no-hope is a paradoxical lived experience of health and quality of life” and was the focus of an internationally coordinated multiple study effort to understand more about hope as a “phenomenon inherent in becoming” (Parse, 1999, p. 2). Hope was found in one of these studies to be the “persistent anticipation of contentment arising with the promise of nurturing affiliations, while inspiration emerges amid easing the arduous” (Toikkanen & Muurinen, 1999, p. 92). The first core concept describes the persistent anticipation of contentment as steadfast foresightfulness, which exemplifies the humanbecoming concept of imaging. Imaging hope is a coconstructed reality that is an assimilation of old ideas with new in a manner that it compatible with the individual’s worldview as the individual actively seeks contentment (Toikkanen & Muurinen, 1999).

In addition to the study on hope, contentment has been used as a concept to describe nine other phenomena inherent in humanbecoming, such waiting (Bournes & Mitchell, 2002), laughing (Parse, 1994; Hayden, 2007), joy-sorrow (Parse, 1997), doing the right thing (Smith, 2006), feeling listened to (Jonas-Simpson, 2003; Jonas-Simpson, et al., 2006; Kagan, 2008), feeling cared for (Bunkers, 2004), persevering through a difficult time (Bournes & Ferguson-Pare, 2005), feeling very tired, (Baumann, 2003), and serenity (Kruse, 1999) (Table 2-2). Only one study focused on the structure of contentment itself (Parse, 2001).

In this study Parse asked ten women, over the age of 65, to speak about their experiences of contentment. The finding of the study is that “contentment is a satisfying calmness amid the arduous as resolute liberty arises with benevolent engagements” (Parse, 2001, p. 198). The first core concept, satisfying calmness amid the arduous, emerged as “feeling good and peaceful” among “stressful situations in everyday life”

(Parse, 2001, p. 198). Contentment is a “sense of fulfilling tranquility that arises amid disquieting situations in the confirming-not confirming of values” (Parse, 2001, p. 198). The participant’s descriptions describe choosing a satisfying calmness, even though difficult situations arise (Parse, 2001). The first principle of Parse’s theory is valuing, or confirming-not confirming cherished beliefs. The beliefs that people choose and cherish are the structured meaning that “confirms contentment as a satisfying calm amid the arduous ... which arose with a resolute liberty” (Parse, 2001, p. 199). The second core concept, resolute liberty, emerged as “determined independence” as the participants confirmed their “self-reliance” (Parse, 2001, p. 199). Independence was found to be a significant construct of contentment, as described in situations in which the participants described their engagement in independent behaviors, such as volunteering, dancing, taking care of their home, and participating in social activities (Parse, 2001). The third core concept, benevolent engagements, refers to involvement and relationship with others. The participants enjoyed spending time with others, but they also enjoyed spending time alone (Parse, 2001). Some examples in the study indicated contentment as a response to momentary activities: “I am content ... when everything is running smoothly” (Parse, 2001, p. 198) yet others indicated contentment as a long-term feeling, such as one woman who described being “content with her life, even when anticipating a drastic change” (Parse, 2001, p. 198).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The humanbecoming hermeneutic method (Cody, 1995; Parse, 2001) is the design chosen for this study. The humanbecoming hermeneutic method is a hermeneutic method linked to the humanbecoming school of thought (Parse, 2001). The method is based largely on the work of Gadamer and Heidegger (2004). The humanbecoming hermeneutic method focuses on the interpretation of universally lived experiences as they are described with text or artwork (Parse, 2001). Universally lived experiences are those that all human beings share.

Nursing science is concerned with understanding the human experience and quality of life. The humanbecoming hermeneutic method has been used to discover emergent meanings of the human experience in two studies. Cody (1995) wove Walt Whitman's poetry with Parse's school of thought to understand more about health and quality of life. Baumann and associates (2001) used Tom Hegg's story, *A Cup of Christmas Tea*, to explore the human emotions surrounding timelessness and cherished connections with others. The study contributes greater understanding to the choices that are made affecting family construction, relationships, and dynamics (Bauman, Carroll, Damgaard, Millar, & Welch, 2001). The humanbecoming hermeneutic method was also used to develop a greater understanding of specific human experiences in five additional studies. Cody (2001) explored mendacity in family relationships and communication using Tennessee William's story, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, contributing to what it means to "bear witness by living true presence" (Cody, 2001, p. 219). Ortiz (2003) dwelled with the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) quilt and the companion text, *A*

Promise to Remember: The NAMES Project Book of Letters to understand more about the experience of the lingering presence of loved ones lost to the disease. Parse (2007) studied hope as it is lived day-to-day in *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*. Understanding more about hope as an experience of health and quality of life leads to a greater understanding of the choices that are made as humans structure and live their life patterns. Baumann (2008) explored wisdom, compassion, and courage in the well-known story of *Wizard of Oz*. Wisdom, compassion, and courage are paradoxical rhythms that reflect every human's value priorities and beliefs as they choose how to live health and quality of life.

The focus of this study is the lived experience of contentment as described in the text of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism*. Through the aesthetic use of text, the author was able to describe her humanly lived experiences.

Hermeneutic Method

Hermeneutics is a philosophy and method that has evolved from the work of Martin Heidegger (1962a; 1927/1982; 1959/1966; 1984) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004). Phenomenology seeks to contribute to human understanding by putting into words universal lived experiences. Hermeneutics is a methodology that has been developed to provide an avenue for interpreting text and understanding phenomenon as describe in text. The historical lineage of hermeneutics and phenomenology provides several starting points from which the method of hermeneutics and research of the lived experience can be underpinned.

Transcendental Phenomenology

Transcendental phenomenology was a shift from physical cause and effect analysis, categorization, manipulation, and control of objective data to the person subjectively experiencing phenomena in consciousness. It is a phenomenology of consciousness aimed at clarifying and explaining how meaning is ascribed to phenomenon in and by consciousness (Spiegelberg, 1982; Van Manen, 2002). The phenomenon of transcendental phenomenology includes the objects of consciousness. Object refers to all objects of thought, including objects in the world that are perceived through the senses, and objects of thought, which includes such things as logical reasoning, dreams, hallucinations, distorted perceptions, thoughts, wishes, and desires. All of these objects are apprehended by consciousness and are considered in transcendental phenomenology to be the phenomenon of reality (Giorgi, 2005). The themes of transcendental phenomenology, also known as phenomenological reflection, include intentionality, eidetic reduction, and constitution of meaning (Van Manen, 2002).

Although Husserl (1913/1982) recognized and valued the role of empirical science, he considered it a partial view of knowledge not capable of dealing with the problems of absolute truth. His aim in the development of phenomenology as a science was to augment empirical science by placing a scientific significance on life itself, find value and meaning for human existence, and understand the human aspect of being human. He moved toward this goal by studying the structure of consciousness in order to develop knowledge of essences (Giorgi, 2005; Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Husserl developed a phenomenological method to study the structure of consciousness while refining phenomenology as a rigorous human science of

transcendental phenomena, with the rigor of that method stemming philosophically, rather than empirically. He argued in *Logical Investigations (Logische Untersuchungen)* that knowledge must be based on absolute insight, not generalizations from experience (Flew, 1979; Giorgi, 2005; Husserl, 1900/1901/1973; Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982; Van Manen, 2002). His quest toward uncovering insights laid a foundation for the examination of consciousness and the objects of consciousness, which he described as transcendental reduction in *Ideas to a Pure Phenomenological Philosophy and Phenomenology (Ideen zu einer reinen Phanomenologie und Phanomenologischen Philosophie)*, an article which appeared in 1913 in his *Yearbook of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Research* (Husserl, 1913/1982; Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982; Van Manen, 2002).

At the time of the publication of *Ideen*, Husserl was not overly concerned with the existence or material realities of perceived objects. He was primarily interested in the examination of the pure presence or essence of the phenomena of consciousness and the way they are perceived. The process assumes the existence of the phenomenon, whether it is a dream, hallucination, perception, or memory. It also assumes the existence of the properties of the object, as perceived by the individual. Husserl's intent at the time was not to seek a cause for phenomenon or to prove their existence. His intent was to describe the essential structures of objects as they constitute themselves or present themselves in consciousness (Giorgi, 2005; Kockelmans, 1994).

Husserl developed a phenomenological way of looking at an object by examining how we direct consciousness toward that object with intentionality, constitute it, and transcend it into consciousness. Objects that are transcended into consciousness are a

construction of perceptual and functional aspects of the object that assist consciousness to identify and place the object. Bracketing of all assumptions and biases of the external world (epoche) is required in order to distinguish between the act of consciousness and the phenomenon; the phenomenon being the object itself transcended to consciousness. In bracketing, past knowledge of the object is set aside (Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982). It is a way to regard the object as distinct from the essence that is found in the relation between the object and the perceiver. To get at the essential structure of object, or phenomenon of consciousness, Husserl developed a rigorous process of transcendental reduction, also known as phenomenological reduction or phenomenological reflection.

The themes of transcendental reduction include intentionality, eidetic reduction, and constitution of meaning. Intentionality was adopted and reshaped from Brentano's concept of intentionality to fit in with the process of transcendental reduction. Intentionality refers to the intentional act of consciousness being conscious of something. All acts of consciousness take an object or 'content'. Openness enables the consciousness to be open to the world, things around us, self, thoughts, wishes, desires, and other types of feelings. Awareness sometimes accompanies openness and sometimes does not. Reflection on consciousness is a nonsensorial awareness of the conscious process, meaning reflection does not rely on the senses for awareness (Giorgi, 2005; Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Eidetic reduction is a way that humans make sense of what is in the world (Giorgi, 2005). It bridges the subjective process of perceiving an object and the objective logical knowledge of the object itself by identifying and distinguishing objects in consciousness. The person enters into subjective interaction with an object in the world

and subjective meaning is brought forth. Subjectivity is a type of being that is a consciousness and openness to objects in a way that is phenomenological, not cause and effect (Giorgi, 2005; Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Constitution of meaning is how sense of things is formed in and by consciousness. The essence of objects correlates to states of mind. There is no distinction between the object that is perceived and the individual's perception of the object (Giorgi, 2005; Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982). As the essence of the phenomenon is manifested in the transcendental experience, it is critical to remember that the manifestation of essence of phenomenon occurs through the methodological aspects of cogito (I think) (Kockelmans, 1994, p. 18). The noematic description, or the naïve first experience with the intentional object, and the cogito, or the mode of thinking of the object, must be distinguished (De Muralt, 1988; Kockelmans, 1994). Although Husserl never completed development of a scientific phenomenological methodology, his efforts contributed significantly toward the development of phenomenology as a rigorous science (Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982).

It is imperative to clarify that in the paradigm of transcendental phenomenology, conscious objects are not the same as physical objects. The reflection on a physical object is not the actual object, but a transcended representation of the object in consciousness. Transcendence of objects leaves them clear to consciousness (Giorgi, 2005; Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Existential Phenomenology

Husserl (1859-1938).

In his later years, Husserl continued to strive toward bringing phenomenology to a scientific level. He struggled to untangle the complexities of subjectivity and to understand how communication with another person about an object in the world can be assumed to be about the same object, even though each person perceives that object in their own way. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy (Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie)*, published in 1936, indicated a movement in Husserl's thinking toward existentialism (Husserl, 1936/1970). This move was an effort to understand the everyday world in which we live, as well as non-physical realities, such as mental and spiritual realities. He diverted his thinking from transcendental ego and consciousness toward prereflective and lifeworld experience. By lifeworld, he was referring to the world as it is immediately experienced, prior to reflection (Van Manen, 2000). He devoted energy toward the development of a scientific foundation to study Geisteswissenschaft, or science of the spirit (Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982). The themes of existential phenomenology include: lived experience, modes of being, ontology, and lifeworld; lived experience meaning what one experiences personally (Husserl, 1936/1970; Van Manen, 1990).

Martin Heidegger was inspired by Husserl's earlier work, *Logical Investigations*; initially studying it without the guidance of Husserl himself. The eventual relationship that developed between the two is of debatable substance; however, Heidegger did assist

Husserl in his teaching and assumed Husserl's chair at the University of Marburg in 1928 (Guignon & Pereboom, 2001).

Heidegger (1889-1976).

Although Heidegger never claimed to be an existentialist (Spiegelberg, 1982), he was instrumental in the development of existential phenomenology. Existential phenomenology is an ontological philosophy of how phenomena present themselves in the lived experience, rather than in the transcended form of Husserl's epistemological phenomenology. According to Heidegger, humans and the activities of humans always take place in the world, and the Being is always being-in-the-world. The problem for Heidegger was describing the distinction between Beings and their being. His quest was to discover the meaning of Being (Heidegger, 1962a).

Heidegger presented this problem as well as his vision of phenomenology in *Being and Time (Sein und Zeit)* in 1927 and continued his quest for understanding in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic (Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz)*, a lecture in which he stated that "the question of Being, the striving for an understanding of Being, is the basic determinant of [human] existence" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 16).

Heidegger's intention in *Being and Time* was to deconstruct the history of ontology and reconstruct it through the transformation of language and the meaning of language, hence his creation and incorporation of such words as Dasein, umwelt, zuhandsein, vorhandensein, and mitwelt. Heidegger's writing is difficult to comprehend even for German speaking philosophers. This is particularly due to the liberties he took with the transformation of language and partly because he never really offered a glossary or

description of his terms. Translators and philosophers have offered suggested translations and description, as demonstrated in Table 3-1.

Heidegger stated that there is the world, there are objects in the world, there is Being-in-the-world, and there is understanding-of-Being. Human-as-being is an object. There are objects in the world. The human-as-being as object is distinct from understanding-of-Being. The object of human-as-being is also distinct from all other objects in the world because of the capability of human as being to possess understanding-of-Being. This concept of Being as the object of an understanding Being is referred to as Dasein, or consciousness. Note the distinction between being and Being, as signified by the use of the capital letter B in the English translation of the term (Dreyfus, 1991; Flew, 1979; Guignon & Pereboom, 2001; Heidegger, 1962b; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Being-in-the-world is particularly significant in understanding Heidegger's phenomenological developments. Dasein's existence is realized through being among objects in the world. The term Dasein itself signifies a unified relationship that the human-as-Being has with the objects in the world and the way that the objects present themselves to the Being. Heidegger argued that the focus of philosophy should be on understanding the experience of being-in-the-world. Heidegger's quest was to develop an understanding of Dasein, or what it is to be human. This entails understanding how Dasein engage with objects in the everyday lifeworld. Heidegger viewed the lifeworld as a phenomenal engagement of Dasein with objects in the world. Understanding this engagement leads to ontological insights about objects and existential truths about Dasein. This is in direct opposition to Husserl, as Heidegger disagreed with Husserl's subjective dichotomy of objects of consciousness and objects of the world. He disagreed

with the idea of the lifeworld as an encapsulation of reality. Husserl viewed objects in consciousness as transcended objects. Heidegger argues that Dasein is already transcended; therefore objects present themselves to Dasein as they are. Heidegger supported this position by arguing that Dasein have a pre-ontological understanding of what is in the world; a knowledge that exists prior to reflection. Objects in the world are simply there and present themselves as objects with identifying properties that are independent of human subjectivity. By this he means that we are aware of our environment or the world around us, even though we might not take notice of it. This pre-ontological, or prereflective understanding is referred to as *zuhandsein*; Being-at-hand (Dreyfus, 1991; Flew, 1979; Guignon & Pereboom, 2001; Heidegger, 1962b; Spiegelberg, 1982).

For Heidegger, being-in-the-world is a unified phenomenon of object in the world and Being. This is the foundation of his phenomenology and, according to him, a basic assumption of ontology. He did adopt Husserl's phenomenological method of transcendental reduction because he realized the need to abandon logic in order to explore the questions not answerable by the traditional methods of logic. However, method differs in the Being-object relationship. The step to transcend the object into consciousness is not considered necessary because Dasein is already transcended and open to the essence of objects in the world the way they are; Being-in-the-world. Heidegger agreed with Husserl that existence can only be accessed and understood through analysis and description of Dasein; the lived experience of being-in-the-world. Existence is the determining characteristic of Dasein. Existence can only be apprehended

through interaction of Dasein with the environment (Umwelt) or external world (Mitwelt).

Past, present, and future are inseparable phases of existence. Action and knowledge are also inseparable. Zuhandsein is shaped by the lived experience of Dasein to result in vorhandensein, or Being-on-hand. Interaction of Dasein with the external world is the lived experience, or knowledge in the present. In the lived experience, a distinction between Dasein and the objects in the world is diminished. The lived experience requires Dasein to be authentic or attentive. It involves awareness of the future, the infinite possibilities that are to be had, and the necessity and consequences of continuously making choices of those possibilities (Dreyfus, 1991; Flew, 1979; Guignon & Pereboom, 2001; Heidegger, 1962b).

Heidegger did not place value on the pure objectification of the environment. Dasein are human minds that represent objects in ideas which are shaped by attitude and beliefs about those object. He believed that in a modern worldview there is no need for distinction between objective and subjective because they are interrelated. Objective refers to what is out in the world. Subjective refers to the interaction of the mind and the objects of the world; a view of self and the values or meaning that the self places on the objectified environment. Disassociating the subjective from the objective leaves a sense of meaninglessness; it results in a distorted one-sided view of reality disconnected from the lived realities of life (Flew, 1979; Guignon & Pereboom, 2001; Heidegger, 1962b). Being-in-the-world, being-at-hand, and being-on-hand, the unified phenomenon of object and world, makes possible Dasein's capability to always be ready to view phenomenon,

or objects in the world. The question that Heidegger asks is: How does phenomenon present itself; What is the nature of things as they are in the world? (Spiegelber, 1982).

Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty was strongly influenced by Husserl's lifeworld (lebenswelt), Heidegger's development of existential phenomenology (being-in-the-world), and Descartes' dualism. His philosophy focused on phenomenology, particularly on the consciousness and perception (Baldwin, 2004; Spiegelberg, 1982; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007).

Merleau-Ponty opposed Cartesian dualism and the extreme realist and subjectivist views of objective reality and subjective constructions of reality. His struggle with the opposition of consciousness and objects directed his argument for an existential unity of body-subject, which he published in *Phenomenology of Perceptions (Phenomenologie de Perception)* in 1945. He stated that a phenomenon is not the static object of empirical science. A phenomenon is the product of the consciousness-body, or subject-body engagement with the world. Consciousness and the human body as a perceiving object are inseparably engaged with the world. This is possible because the human as conscious being is always in a subjective state capable of intentionally constructing the reality of objects in the moment. This construction of the reality of an object in the moment is possible through the use of a natural prereflective understanding of the world (Baldwin, 2004; Spiegelberg, 1982; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007).

However, the human construction of the reality of an object is only a single perspective. The human as a conscious perceptive being grasps reality only in the now moment. The object is more than the now moment, more than the single perspective. The

object as it transcends a single human perspective; it is more fully manifested through unlimited possible perspectives.

Objects are meaningfully related among other objects in the world, and each object is reflective of the meaning of other objects. Through being-in-the-world the perceiver takes on all potential perspectives of the object, as well as all potential perspectives of other objects in relation. The reality that the perceiver constructs of the object evolves from the individual's involvement with and understanding of the world, as well as the meaning that forms the full scope of possible perceptions. Only after meaning of the world has been created can the individual turn attention to specific objects with any certain clarity. As attention is directed toward a specific object, new meaning is given to that object in relation to the world. Reality is established through continuous mutual engagement with the world (Baldwin, 2004; Spiegelberg, 1982; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007).

Husserl argued that all consciousness is consciousness of something, or that there is content to consciousness. This creates a distinction between acts of thought and the action of thought. He posited that active construction of act of thought and action of thought is the initial step in the formation of consciousness. Merleau-Ponty disagreed with Husserl that all consciousness is consciousness of something. He believes that all consciousness is perceptual consciousness. He argued that perception is not an act or result of sensory input; it is an act of primordial openness to the life world. This is an important distinction between Husserl's phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty's (Baldwin, 2004; Spiegelberg, 1982; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007).

He described the body-subject connection by articulating that the human body is more than an object; it is a continuous experience of open perceptual engagement with the world; a being-in-the-world of one's body. The body is the manifestation of consciousness. The intentionality of consciousness, being-in-the-world, is also intentionality of the body; therefore the body is consciousness. The body-subject unity, the body as consciousness, enables the human to perform transcended activities, such as intellectual activities, creative acts, thought, sense, and language (Baldwin, 2004: Spiegelberg, 1982; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007).

Merleau-Ponty explored the relationship between consciousness and the world and described the aesthetic manifestation of consciousness in *The Structure of Behavior* (*Le Structure du Comportement*) in 1942. He posited that, unlike science which is a looking back at experience, art captures perception in the moment. Science looks at causal factors and occurs only after reflection; science is an abstraction of the phenomenon itself and is the individual perceptual activity of the scientist and the scientist's perspective (Baldwin, 2004: Spiegelberg, 1982; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007).

Reality must view phenomenon in the moment; the now moment. Speaking language expresses consciousness of thought in the now moment. Speaking language is not the same as language spoken. Language spoken refers to the signs and significance of culturally constructed linguistics. Speaking language is a unique perspective of reality for the individual in the now moment as the body-subject engages with the world in the now moment (Baldwin, 2004: Spiegelberg, 1982; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007).

Merleau-Ponty agreed with Husserl that phenomenology is the quest to understand the thing of a phenomenon that makes it what it is, or the essence of a

phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Van Manen, 1990). However, for Merleau-Ponty, the phenomenon is in the basic experience of subject-body engagement in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Van Manen, 1990). In order to grasp the essence of a phenomenon one must learn to view experience in the immediate world in an open and authentic manner. Observation or looking back with reflection is not appropriate means to grasp the essence the phenomenon of lived experience. One must be open to the immediate experience, the meaning of the immediate experience in the now moment, and collect descriptive expressions of the accumulation of now moments. Essence is the collective descriptive expressions of the lived experiences of a phenomenon that convey its nature and significance (Baldwin, 2004; Spiegelberg, 1982; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007; van Manen, 1990).

Reduction allows one to directly experience the lifeworld. There is no transcendence of objects into consciousness, as Husserl suggested. There is an open awareness of things as they present themselves. Reduction brings the essence of the phenomenon to the individual as it is experienced in the moment, not as it is conceptualized. Looking back is transcendence. Transcendence is not as the world is, but as the world is in consciousness. Reduction is not a procedure. It is an attentiveness and openness to things as they are in the moment. Understanding of the essence of something, the unique meaning of a phenomenon, requires being open and thoughtful and attentive to the phenomenon. The essence of the phenomenon is recreated through language and performed through writing (van Manen, 1990).

In existential phenomenology, reduction is a method as well as an attitude. Both participant and researcher must adopt the attitude in order for insight and understanding

to occur. Understanding and meaning of phenomenon are continuously evolving throughout the writing and reading of the phenomenological text, or recreation of the essence of the phenomenon. However, it is not possible for a complete reduction to the pure essence of the phenomenon to be reached. Any essence is too complex and personal to be fully illuminated, recreated, and understood. However, the phenomenological insight or understanding of the phenomenon is a type of knowledge (van Manen, 1990).

It is necessary to epoche, or bracket during the reduction. Without bracketing, the meaning of the phenomenon will be affected or altered by personal bias. Bracketing requires that beliefs and prior knowledge be recognized, reflected on, and set aside. The process of bracketing requires the following steps to be entered into all-at-once: 1) wonder: heuristic reduction 2) openness: hermeneutic reduction 3) concreteness: phenomenological reduction 4) universality in contingency: eidetic reduction, and 5) flexible rationality: methodological reduction (van Manen, 2000).

Sartre (1905-1980).

Jean-Paul Sartre was a student in Paris with Merleau-Ponty and worked together with him to edit *The Modern Times (Les Temps Moderne)*. Sartre was politically and philosophically influenced by Hegel, whose philosophy of Geist provided a foundation for his views of Marxism and socialism. He also was heavily influenced by Husserl, who influenced his publication of *Nausea (le Nausee)* in 1938, and by Heidegger, who influenced his publication of *Being and Nothingness (L'Etre et le Neant)* in 1943 (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Sartre believed that both literature and philosophy are political. His philosophy was heavily influenced by his political views, and his politics were underpinned by his

philosophy. He believed that one must live their conviction of philosophy and strived to influence social change through his prolific writing in *The Modern Times* (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

In the classic work, *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre carried forward, clarified, and named the existential phenomenology that was stimulated by Heidegger and expanded upon by Merleau-Ponty. He expanded on his philosophy in *Existentialism is a Humanism* (*L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*) in 1946, in which he focused on the individually lived human experience and the freedom and individual responsibility of choosing (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Sartre focused on the manner in which social structures objectify people and devalue individual consciousness and freedom. He opposed capitalism, racism, and sexism and supported the structures and politics of Marxism, socialism, and communism. However, he disagreed with Hegel and Marx that social realities define the consciousness of the group. He believed in individual consciousness and posited that all individuals are innately free to choose (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

From the moment of birth, humans act meaningfully and participate through subjective engagement with the world to shape their individual consciousness. However, along with the freedom to choose is the responsibility for self. Responsibility for self involves responsibility of consciousness as well as actions. Even individuals who do not assume responsibility for self are making that a conscious choice. To choose not to make a choice is still a choice not to choose; therefore, the individual who makes the decision not to assume responsibility, to make a choice, assumes the responsibility for the consequences of their lack of action. This is basically Sartre's moral philosophy. Ethics

and morals are a matter of choice, the individual consciousness making a choice. He agrees with Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty that humans affirm themselves through being-in-the-world with others; however, he asserts that morals are a matter of individual, not collective choosing (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Self-actualization is a matter of choosing, as well. The uniqueness of phenomena in Sartre's phenomenology is that individual's choose how they engage in the world. Individuals who assume the objectified identity placed on them by society are deceiving themselves. Self actualization involves facticity. Facticity is a process of realizing the objective realities in the world that have the potential to affect the self, knowing how those realities work, and knowing that the self possesses a consciousness that is independent of those realities. It is the independent consciousness that enables an individual to choose to move beyond the apparent limitations of society, or make the best of a situation (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

There is a distinction between consciousness of self, conscious state of being, and consciousness itself. Although individuals are responsible for their own consciousness, consciousness itself is not a physical thing, therefore is not observable or graspable. Consciousness is continuously in a state of having to choose the future of the conscious state of being. The future of the individual is dependent on the choices that are made (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre focuses on existence in relation to self and consciousness. Consciousness is unique to human beings as distinguished by the terms en-soi and pour-soi. En-soi translates to being-in-itself; things that are innate objects and do not possess consciousness or meaning. Pour-soi translates to being-for-itself and

describes the uniqueness of the human being as an object among objects. Human beings have a consciousness and are conscious of their own existence. Poir-soi are open to their own consciousness, open to their own future, and possess intuition. The very act of consciousness of self sets the human aside from non-conscious objects. Pour-soi is more than simply being conscious-of-self; pour-soi would not exist without consciousness. Consciousness enables intuition of nothingness, which enables the pour-soi to choose. This is the core of Sartre's phenomenology and the phenomena that encompasses individual freedom of consciousness and the ethics that are a responsibility of that consciousness (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Pour-soi only becomes aware of one's own existence through being perceived by another pour-soi. The difficulty that pour-soi encounter is that when being perceived by another there is always the risk of assuming the objectified perception that the other images. In reverse, it is also true that there is a risk of perceiving the other as an objectified image, rather than an individual consciousness. This relationship between perception of pour-soi, or the perception of other conscious human beings, is a central focus when studying phenomena that involve social objectification, such as racism, sexism, and stereotypes. Sartre's phenomenology focuses on the conscious human being as a free individual, a being-in-itself, with an individual yet indescribable conscious state of being (Flew, 1979; van Manen, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1982).

Giorgi's Method.

Giorgi (2005) is one of today's leading students, interpreters, and teachers of phenomenology. He began his career as an experimental psychologist; however, his interest in the human experience led him toward phenomenology. He has developed a

phenomenological method, based on the phenomenologies of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, to study the human experience. Although Giorgi is in the field of psychology, not nursing, he has contributed substantially toward the clarification of phenomenology in nursing.

Giorgi (2005) clarifies the distinction between physical objects and transcended objects beginning with the explanation that changes that occur in actual physical things in the world are a result of internal and external affects on the physical object. All physical objects, for example a table, can be observed from only one profile. The table cannot be observed in its entirety. The profile is dependent on the perspective of the observer, or perceiver. A succession of perspectives can give the perceiver a better sense of the whole table; however, the whole table cannot be imaged all at once (Giorgi, 2005). In the same light, any object, whether an object of the world or an object of consciousness can only be perceived in a succession of perspectives in order to gain a better sense of the whole, and the perceiving of the object is unique to the perspective of the individual.

Consciousness is what makes phenomenology unique (Giorgi, 2005). Consciousness actualizes presences, meaning that consciousness enables one to be present to self, others, and to the world. Consciousness mediates the human being and the world; the world comes to the being through consciousness. Phenomenology aims to understand consciousness (Giorgi, 2005; Kockelmans, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1982).

The process of understanding involves reflecting on a particular stream of consciousness, which is actually a process of accessing the phenomenological data. One does not create a stream of consciousness; a stream of consciousness is discovered. Events are recalled in this stream of consciousness and the various objects of

consciousness, such as thoughts, images, fantasies, and memories are distinguished. Problems are identified, possibilities are explored, and insights are gained (Giorgi, 2005). Rigorous science requires clarity of the most basic insights and a systematic order of building propositions on those insights (Spiegelberg, 1982). The most basic insights are found in the subjective knowing of an object. The intentional act of consciousness and focus on the object actually transcends the object. A controversial aspect of Husserl's phenomenology was that he believed in order to obtain clarity of the absolute insight into a phenomenon; one must be free of presuppositions regarding the phenomenon (Spiegelberg, 1982).

The question that Husserl asks is how these streams of consciousness are to be understood; not causal explanations for phenomena but rather descriptions of the pure state of consciousness, or the phenomena of consciousness. Therefore, the phenomenon of interest in transcendental phenomenology is the objects of consciousness. Objects can be things of the world or things of consciousness. Objects of consciousness include such things as memories, hallucinations, dreams, wishes, desires, or feelings (Giorgi, 2005).

Giorgi (2005) used memory as an example to explain objects of consciousness. Memory is a re-presenting of experience. A memory is not the same thing as the experience itself; a memory is non-sensorial. A physical object is in the world. A memory of that object is in the consciousness. A memory is presented in consciousness as imaged creations and is shared through verbal representations that describe the imaging. There is no physical cause for the imaging. The relationship between intention and the image is not causal and the image of the memory as an object of consciousness is not a real object. Phenomenology is not focused on how the imaging of the memory happens. It is focused

on the meaning ascribed to the memory that is imaged. Rather than focus on existence or cause of a memory, the focus is on the meaning and what can be understood of the memory in terms of the meaning that is ascribed to it (Giorgi, 2005).

The meaning that is ascribed to phenomenon is subjective. They come from the subjective way of being; that type of being that is a conscious openness to phenomenon. Clarification of meaning leads to understanding and illumination of possibilities. Clarification of the experience of a phenomenon can clarify why a person thinks a certain way regarding the phenomenon, result in understanding, illuminate the possibilities for decision making, and result in more authentic living and interactions (Giorgi, 2005). Understanding how phenomena are perceived assists in understanding how assumptions of reality are formed.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Philosophical hermeneutics is an ontological philosophy that becomes intertwined with phenomenology when the research method encompasses an interpretive focus (van Manen, 2002). Hermeneutics itself has evolved into a variety of viewpoints backed by various philosophical and theoretical debates. Schleiermacher created hermeneutics as a theory to interpret and understand the meaning of text (Schwandt, 2001). Dilthey developed hermeneutics into an epistemological philosophy as well as into a methodology to explore knowledge and understanding in the human sciences through interpretation of the lived experience (Dilthey, 1833/2007). Heidegger took issue with Dilthey's interest in interpretation and claimed that to interpret is to understand, and that understanding is a fundamental concept of existence (Heidegger, 1962b; Schwandt, 2001).

Hans-Georg Gadamer agreed with Heidegger's ontological claim and initiated the development of hermeneutics as a philosophy of "being in the world". Gadamer was a student of Heidegger and developed hermeneutic phenomenology in his quest to understand and describe the phenomenon of understanding. He believed that understanding is shared through linguistics, therefore explored language and dialogue in relation to understanding experience (Gadamer, 2004). In his renowned essay, *Truth and Method (Wahrheit und Methode; 1960)*, he argued that understanding is not based on a person-object relationship. It is based on understanding as a process. Understanding the process of understanding leads toward the discovery and communication of the meaning of experience. Meaning is shaped over time by bearing witness to past experience and is aesthetically offered in the present as an evolving art form (Gadamer, 1960/1975; Gadamer, 1976; Schwandt, 2001).

Bearing witness to the past does not necessarily denote understanding. Understanding is an ongoing process that evolves through ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation of objects. The assumption of hermeneutics is that understanding an object and interpreting that object is the same thing; therefore, understanding evolves through understanding and re-understanding of objects. Understanding is shaped, guided, affects, and is affected by ongoing experiences and prejudices. According to Gadamer, hermeneutics is universally ontological because understanding is foundational to all human activity and to all human's way of being-in-the-world. Although understanding is continuously sought, it is never fully achieved (Gadamer, 1976; Schwandt, 2001).

Language is an aesthetic function that reflects intentionality and allows a person to make meaning of the world. Meaning is not a static result but rather an ongoing

process that is continuously being shaped and biased by the experiences of the person. Past experiences shape the meaning of the present, which affects the person's view of future possibilities (Gadamer, 1976; Schwandt, 2001).

Humanbecoming Hermeneutic Method

The humanbecoming hermeneutic method has evolved through the work of many phenomenologists, specifically those who wrote of phenomena through an existential and hermeneutic perspective. Particularly meaningful are Dilthey, who revived Schleiermacher's hermeneutic theory of interpretation in the mid-19th century, Heidegger, who modified the focus of hermeneutics from a method of study into one of ontology and introduced the hermeneutic circle, and Gadamer, who expanded the hermeneutic circle and initiated the development of hermeneutics as a philosophy of being-in-the-world.

Dilthey suggested that the reader interprets text and develops an understanding based from a perspective that is shaped with the reader's lived experiences. He saw hermeneutics as a relevant way in which to understand the epistemological and ontological facets of knowledge expressed through the lived experience, as opposed to the objective manner in which the natural sciences were studied. He did believe, however, that lived experience is too sensitive and too overwhelming to be studied directly. He therefore proposed that interpretations of lived experience are best studied through expressions of experience, such as art and literary pieces. He suggested that interpretations of lived experiences are an iterative movement between the implicit and explicit, or an understanding of the pieces of the whole in relation to the whole, and the whole in relation to the pieces. He referred to this iterative process as the hermeneutic circle (Cody, 1995; Dilthey, 1833/2007; Flew, 1972).

Heidegger embraced the description of the hermeneutic circle. He modified the focus of hermeneutics from a method of study into one of ontology. He argued that understanding is the foundation of knowledge, and that the only way of knowing is through the subjective experience of being-in-the-world. He claimed no dichotomy between objective knowledge and subjective knowledge; the experience of being-in-the-world subjectively shapes the view of the world. He likened the many experience of being-in-the-world to multiple horizons: the present perspective is the horizons of multiple past experiences; the horizon that is presently seen is the future potential for current experiences. All horizons, therefore, meet in the present; an ontological metaphor for a unitary understanding of the past, present, and future (Cody, 1995; Flew, 1972; Heidegger, 1962b; Parse, 1997).

Gadamer studied with Heidegger and agreed with his claim regarding subjective experience. He elaborated on the hermeneutic circle and initiated the development of hermeneutics as a philosophy of “being in the world”. He believed that understanding is shared through linguistics, therefore explored language and dialogue in relation to interpreting and understanding experience (Gadamer, 2004). The purpose of Gadamer’s hermeneutics is not to secure objective knowledge from the text; the purpose is to develop an understanding of what the text means for the reader/interpreter. Understanding is developed and shaped from the understandings that have been gained through all previous experiences (Gadamer, 1976; 1989).

Cody (1995) shifted the static metaphor of the hermeneutic circle to a more dynamic image of a hermeneutic spiral in order to depict the continuous interplay of interpretation and understanding that occurs between the researcher and the text. The

humanbecoming hermeneutic method is not concerned with making static assumptions regarding objective types of knowledge. The knowledge that is sought is the ongoing understanding the researcher cocreates with the text as the meaning of the text is interpreted. Therefore the humanbecoming hermeneutic method has a transformative interpretive focus (Parse, 2001).

The assumptions that underpin the humanbecoming hermeneutic method include the following: 1) human perspective is personal meaning cocreated with the humanuniverse mutual process 2) human creations and interpretation of texts and artforms are perspectival 3) the rhythmical process of researcher-text and researcher-artform dialogue coconstructs meaning moments 4) new understandings of lived experience arise with interpretations of texts and artforms, and 5) understandings transfigure the researcher's life patterns (Parse, 2001, p. 172).

The primary reason for choosing the humanbecoming hermeneutic method is that it is a nursing theory linked method that can uncover significant understanding of the experience of contentment in the context of a unique situation: in this case living with Asperger's. Ontologically, the humanbecoming school of thought and theory are consistent with the researcher's perspective on truth and reality. The researcher heartily believes that there are many realities, but the single reality that is most meaningful is experience as viewed from the perspective of the individual. It is what shapes one's perspective toward others, nursing, and life. The researcher is interested in exploring and understanding the universally lived experience of contentment and learning more about the perspective of experience as described by the individual living the experience, as well as about her own perspective as she reads the description of the experience of others.

From an existential hermeneutic perspective, autobiographies are rich aesthetic expressions that capture the essence of experience in a moment in time. These captured moments are multilayered. The researcher is free to unfold the layers over time and discover the meaning the text reveals. This is a method that frees the researcher to interpret the description of others with her own perspective, grow with the research, transforming her own knowledge and understanding throughout the process and beyond.

The humanbecoming hermeneutic method is a systematic methodological process of interpreting, understanding, and describing the meaning of humanly lived experiences in texts. It is a process of “discoursing with penetrating engagement, interpreting with quiescent beholding, and understanding with inspiring envisaging” all-at-once (Parse, 2007, p. 149).

Discoursing with Penetrating Engagement

The researcher enters into a rhythmical reflective relationship and dialogues with the text through reading, reflection, rereading, and immersing with the words. Through an iterative process of ongoing engagement the researcher explores important life experiences and moments while searching for obvious and not so obvious meanings. The “horizon” from which the meaning of the text is uncovered in this study is the humanbecoming hermeneutic method and the humanbecoming school of thought. Engagement, searching for meaning, interpretation, and cocreation of meaning is an all-at-once process (Parse, 2001; 2007).

Interpreting with Quiescent Beholding

The researcher reads and ponders the words, sentences, and hidden meanings of the text, dwelling with the possibilities of surface meanings that are either clear or

implied. Logic and reason are used to get a sense of the meaning that arises with the researcher-text dialogue. Coconstruction of understanding is an iterative rhythmical process that evolves in contemplative moments with researcher-text (Parse, 1981; 2008).

Understanding with Inspiring Envisaging

As the researcher enters into the researcher-text dialogue, understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon under study arises. The understanding is an interpretation that is shaped with the researcher's past experiences and the now moment of the researcher-text dialogue. Understanding illuminates new insights and new visions. Although it is not possible to know everything there is to know about a phenomenon, lingering presence with the text enables the researcher to know more about the phenomenon and transforms the researcher (Parse, 1981; 2008).

The method described by Parse (2001) provides guidance to ensure that the emergent meanings of human experiences interpreted through the process are scientifically rigorous. The development of knowledge through scientifically rigorous methodology contributes scientific knowledge to the foundation of nursing.

Humanbecoming Hermeneutic Method: Researcher's Stance

The researcher's stance for this study is the humanbecoming school of thought (Parse, 2001; 2008). The ontology of the humanbecoming school of thought is that human and universe are a unified mutual process that is inseparable, unpredictable, and continuously changing (Parse, 2007). Humans are open beings. Humans are free to make choices in their situation, free to choose meanings in their situations, and accept responsibility for the choices they make as they coexist with the humanuniverse process (Parse, 2007; 2008).

Humanbecoming is a continuous process or journey that evolves as humans choose from illimitable possibilities to structure meaning in their situations, cocreate rhythmical patterns of relating with the humanuniverse process, and transcend with ideas of possible options for more choices (Parse, 2007; 2008). Cocreating reality is a seamless symphony of becoming. Humanuniverse and humanbecoming are paradoxical processes that evolve with the explicit-tacit value priorities that occur all-at-once in speaking-being silent and moving-being still, while enabled-limited in connecting-separating (Parse, 2008).

Immersion in the humanbecoming literature in which contentment has been explored as either a phenomenon (Parse, 2001) or described as a construct (Baumann, 2003; Bournes & Ferguson-Pare, 2005; Bournes & Mitchell, 2002; Bunkers, 2004; Hayden, 2007; Jonas-Simpson, 2003; Jonas-Simpson, et al., 2006; Kagan, 2008; Parse, 1994; 1996; 1997; Smith, 2006) has widened the lens for the researcher to explore contentment with *Songs of the Gorilla Nation* from a humanbecoming perspective. The first humanbecoming studies in which contentment was used as a construct were all accomplished by Parse (1994; 1996; 1997). The first involved exploring the phenomenon of laughing and health with 20 men and women over the age of 65. The finding was that “laughing and health is a potent buoyant vitality sparked through mirthful engagements, prompting an unburdening delight deflecting disheartenments while emerging with blissful contentment” (Parse, 1994, p. 58). Following this study Parse explored the quality of life for persons living with Alzheimer’s disease. The findings were that “quality of life is a contentment with the remembered and now affiliations that arises amidst the tedium of the commonplace, as an easy-uneasy flow of transfiguring surfaces

with liberating possibilities and confining restraints, while desiring cherished intimacies yields with inevitable distancing in the vicissitudes of life, as contemplating the ambiguity of the possible emerges with yearning for successes in the moment” (Parse, 1996, p. 130). A study the following year which explored the paradox of joy-sorrow with women over the age of 65 revealed that “joy-sorrow is pleasure amid adversity emerging with the cherished contentment of benevolent engagements” (Parse, 1997, p. 83).

Parse’s next use of her nursing theory linked phenomenological methodology with the lived experience of contentment with ten women over the age of 65. She determined the structure of contentment for the study to be “a satisfying calmness amid the arduous as resolute liberty arises with benevolent engagements (Parse, 2001, p. 197).

Although additional Parse research method studies have revealed contentment to be part of the structure of waiting (Bournes & Mitchell, 2002), feeling very tired (Baumann, 2003), being listened to (Jonas-Simpson, 2003; Kagan, 2008), feeling cared for (Bunkers, 2004), persevering through a difficult time (Bournes & Ferguson-Pare, 2005), doing the right thing, (Smith, 2006), and laughing (Hayden, 2007), no further studies have contributed toward understanding the structure of contentment (see Table 2-2).

The Hermeneutic Engagement

The text of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism* was carefully read and studied. The researcher immersed in the text during and between several readings, continuously searching for the meaning of contentment buried in the descriptions so carefully sculpted by Prince-Hughes. Passages were highlighted, words and phrases were underlined, and notations were made in a notebook as well as on the

margins of the pages. With each rereading, the researcher became increasingly absorbed with the all-at-once process of penetrating engagement, quiescent beholding, and inspiring envisaging. The ambiguities that lie hidden between the lines of the text began to reveal what was written-not written as Prince-Hughes' lived experience of contentment was brought to life through what was implicitly-explicitly implied through written speech-unwritten silence as well as written action-unwritten action and written stillness-unwritten stillness. As the researcher dwelled with the text, each new moment blended with all past and yet-to-be moments in the all-at-once. New ideas were disclosed and merged with ideas already present as well as with ideas not yet disclosed. Understanding grew through confirming and not confirming everchanging interpretations that were attended to and distanced from. The structure of contentment began to take form with the illimitable implicit and explicit meanings revealed in the moment-to-moment engagement of the researcher-text dialogue. The researcher surfaced from the immersion and was transformed with an inspiring understanding of contentment.

The Hermeneutic Situation

The text is a published autobiography written by a woman who describes herself as having been diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. The author, Dawn Prince-Hughes, experienced herself as being different than those around her; differences she eventually associated with the medical diagnosis of Asperger's. She stated that being diagnosed as having Asperger's was liberating, as it confirmed and validated her interpretation of her experiences. Through the aesthetic activity of writing her autobiography, *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism*, Prince-Hughes was able to recount the experiences of her life. She described thoughts and feelings that can only be partially

shared through the expressive use of words. This hermeneutic interpretation is aimed at exploring the meaning hidden in what is said as well as what was not said in the text of this autobiography.

CHAPTER 4

CONTENTMENT IN MEANING MOMENTS

The Hermeneutic Situation: Text and Artform

The text is Dr. Prince-Hughes languaging the evolving rhythm of her life. From the earliest moments of her life, she realized the human quest for contentment. In her autobiography she illustrates a reflective journey, winding in and out of the private sanctums of her thoughts and memories, exploring her living rhythm of contentment-disharmony and her gradual progression toward a more meaningful life. She describes many experiences of feeling isolated, angry, unhappy, and depressed, as well as situations in which she experienced feelings of panic. She talked about problems with sleep, her participation in self-destructive activities, and even dwelling on the peace that dying would bring. She describes growing up as feeling increasingly “alienated, different, disconnected, and hurting” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 27). As she grew older she said she came to realize that all choices have consequences, she focused on developing an understanding of what choices could be made to lead toward the quality of life she could be content with, in other words, realizing a contented quality of life. The text documents that she realized that the way she interpreted events in her life shaped her understanding, and that her understanding of life affected her interpretation of events. Through an evolving understanding of her living rhythm of contentment-disharmony, she was able to understand more about her situation of living with Asperger’s, including the social communication and interaction she struggles with. She was able to learn to make choices to lead toward a personal experience of contentment and the quality of life she had sought for so long.

Prince-Hughes stated that she was aware at an early age that she strongly experienced sensory stimuli. She describes discomfort when held:

When people would try to cuddle me I would stiffen and push away from them, feeling like I was drowning. It was worse when they tried to kiss me, and their faces loomed above me and blocked out the sun (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 16).

She was, however, able to instigate contact with specific people for a short period of time. The contact was normally associated and made more tolerable by scent and touch. Her uncle's arms made her feel less threatened and more protected. Her uncle also never looked her in the eye:

If I initiated this kind of closeness I could bear it for a while, and I often approached my favorite uncle in this way. I loved his smell, like hair pomade and hot skin. He was a fat man, and I loved the security of his big arms. He didn't ever try to kiss me that I remember, and he often looked away from me when I was in his arm, which I think made, him less threatening (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 17).

Tactile stimuli were disturbing, particularly on the surface of her hands and feet. She never crawled because he could not tolerate the feeling of the rough carpet on her hands. She explains further:

I held my hands in tight balls because I could not cope with the possibility of getting dirt on my palms ... I could not stand the feel of dust or flour on any part of my body. Dust between my toes was enough to send me into a full-blown rage (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 30).

Objects that appear ordinary to most people were frightening to Prince-Hughes, for example, she talked about being terrified of store mannequins:

My strategy for survival was to hide inside the clothing racks. This served several purposes: I was safe ... and the feel of soft fabric and the clothing's dark colors would help me to calm down. I always felt safer in the dark (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 21).

Bright lights and loud noises continue to be painful and offensive. She continues to startle and be angry when someone touches her unexpectedly, although she is able to tolerate physical touch for short periods of time if she initiates it. She continues to describe social situations as awkward and stressful and social interaction is difficult, particularly when she is in a group of people.

Prince-Hughes wrote that when she was younger and living with her parents and grandparents she was free to engage in activities to explore and experience feeling content. She describes engaging in momentary activities that soothed her feelings of anxiety and promoted feelings of peacefulness and serenity in the moment, for example, having her scalp massaged or her arm lightly stroked, eating Alka Seltzer, salt, or sucking on burnt match heads, from smelling purple irises and tin boxes of Band-aids, and through seeing the color turquoise.

When I looked at [turquoise] I would feel little turquoise shivers run up and down my spine and hear turquoise ringing in my ears. It smelled something like vanilla milkshake and tasted like the sea ... I gazed enraptured at the items in my world that were this color (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 24).

The freedom to engage in these activities led to an overall sense of contentment for her. Repetition and sameness were essential to her comfort, particularly when leaving the familiarity of her home. Prince-Hughes's parents and grandparents lived with similar autistic situations; therefore they understood and saw no need to stop her from engaging in unusual yet comforting and pleasure inducing activities that contributed so much toward her contentment in those early years.

She talked about finding comfort and security in knowing that each flower and building on the way to the grocery store would be in the same place each time she saw it. She responded to any sort of change, such as a changed building or a flower removed from a garden by closing her eyes so as not to have to deal with the panic of it not being there, "I would feel like I was dying – my heart would pound, my ears would ring, and my whole consciousness would go hollow" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 20). She imagined the objects would think she didn't exist anymore if she did not see them, and that she would disappear if she was not surrounded by familiarity and sameness. "I felt that I would disappear if I were not hemmed in by the familiar and unchanging" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 20). Change was very difficult in every facet of her life. As a toddler she used the same blue baby bottle until she was four, at which time she switched to a deep violet aluminum cup from which she would only drink root beer. She describes a sense of comfort, "I would delight at looking into the comforting depths of the purple world inside the cup, the smell and taste of root beer like some ancient sea against my lips, blotting out the world" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 20).

Prince-Hughes described being terrified, confused, and frustrated on her first day of kindergarten. The newness of her surroundings, the persistent chatter and crying of the

children in the schoolyard, the teacher calling to various children seemed overwhelmingly disorderly.

I am remembering ... the day I started kindergarten. I was deeply upset. I didn't say it outright, as many of the other children did; instead I felt hollow, and the world lost its sound. My mother waved to me as she stood in front of our car. ... The teacher had told us to line up to go inside for the first day, and I was confused: Where was I to stand in line? Would people avoid touching me? Where was the order? Children screamed, cried, rushed around. They ran after their parents and begged to go home. I stood silent as the teacher tried to marshal this chaos into order. It's all over, I thought to myself. My life is over (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 35-36).

The only way she could think of to manage the disorder was to find an object that symbolized stability, a smooth pebble, and run back to the car and hand it to her mother. It was an expression of love to her mother. She imagined her mother holding the pebble in her pocket all day, an extension of herself safe and close to her mother in her pocket.

With sadness beyond description I looked for something solid. I picked up a pebble at my feet. As I ran to give the rock – so long a symbol of stability to me – to my mother, the teacher called to me sternly ... I was thinking as loudly as I could that I loved her, that I wanted to go home, and that I knew my wish was hopeless. I thought about my mother holding the rock all day and thus holding me close to her. I wanted to be in her pocket. The teacher yelled again ... I felt hollow, and the world lost is sound ... I took my place in line and felt like a prisoner about to walk into confinement, not to emerge for a very long time ... It

was the first of many times I was to get into trouble for doing a strange thing (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 35 - 36).

Another situation was described by Prince-Hughes's as she recalled entering grade school. She describes feeling alone, afraid, and not understood, "The school was larger and more imposing than the first one ... further from home and safety" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 37). She describes a moment of contentment during that time as she walked with her mother in the woods:

Just the two of us. We explored a trail ... and found an almost mystical glade; showers of sun rained through the green canopy far above our heads ... I don't remember talking. We took turns swinging on a vine ... we laughed ... I think that being alone with her outside where I felt safe , the absence of dialogue, and being alone with her allowed the walls around me to disappear so that I really connected with her deeply (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 38).

Although Prince-Hughes possessed savant skills in reading and language, math was difficult. Multiplication tables presented particular difficulty. She describes an experience of disharmony during an encounter with her third grade teacher:

She would stand beside me with the stopwatch and press down on me from above as I sat, pencil stock-still in hand, unable to move under the strain of her physical proximity ... 'Do that table!' ... She put her face three inches from mine. 'Do that table! ... I couldn't move ... I was literally petrified ... my mind swam. I often couldn't take in people as whole entities ... now the threatening and disembodied pieces of my teacher swirled around me, attacking from every angle. I was caught in a whirlwind of horrible sensory information and unrelenting criticism... I never

told my parents about it. It didn't occur to me that I could communicate about things that happened. I simply wasn't able to understand that use of words (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 42-43).

An experience of feeling not understood was described as Prince-Hughes recalled a visit to the school psychologist in third grade. The psychologist asked how she felt when she rode a certain ride at the fair:

I ... revealed to her that I felt "special" when I rode the Round-Up ride at the fair. When she asked me for clarification, I told her, "It makes me sleepy." I didn't have the sensation-discrete vocabulary to tell her it made me feel content and relaxed as well as joyful (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 45).

Sleepy was the only word that Prince-Hughes could imagine to describe the momentary glimpse of contentment she experienced through feeling relaxed and happy.

In addition to problems relating to the adults in the school, Prince-Hughes described feeling isolated and bullied by her peers on the playground and the solace experienced through a relationship with her fifth grade teacher, who listened to her, respected her thoughts, understood her strengths and encouraged her to excel in her strong areas of writing and reading. She allowed Prince-Hughes to avoid the bullying of her peers at recess by allowing her to stay in and focus on writing poetry and engaging in intellectual conversations. This experience of contentment in the midst of disharmony was described:

Kay Eckiss seemed to understand my problems ... She never criticized ... Best of all, she did not make me go outside for recess and play with the other children. We would have long talks ... she wouldn't laugh at me when I stated my belief[s]

... She took me seriously when I said I felt like I was a million years old ... The times when she did disagree with me she gave me reasons. Logical and well thought out ones. This separated her from almost everyone else I had ever known. She made me want to understand. I started to feel like there might be a chance for me not to be alone (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 47).

It was during this brief period of contentment that Prince-Hughes's parents made the decision to move from the familiar surroundings of her home and possessions, away from the comfort of her grandparents, and away from the teacher with whom she had been allowed to engage in activities and relationships that emerged in an overall sense of contentment.

Prince-Hughes's anxiety and frustration suggest increasingly shifting patterns of contentment-disharmony as she entered junior high school. She reports continued suffering and loneliness as well as experiences of cruelty and bullying at the hands of her peers and teachers. Her father once told her that her parents were considering admitting her to a hospital. Prince-Hughes responded by vowing to "find a way to be normal and fit in with people at school if it kills me" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 51). She admits to drinking alcohol as a method to cope with her increasing sense of dissonance and in an attempt to fit in with her peers. Her mother's friend agreed to buy alcohol for her and leave it next to the school grounds. Prince-Hughes experienced acceptance from her peers for the first time as she openly obtained the alcohol from the drop point and became inebriated during recess:

Though I still had no friends at school, the other kids admired my drinking prowess and the nerve I seemed to have; I would get drunk right on the school

grounds ... I would go [to parties] for the free alcohol. I would often end up being effectively raped by some boy or man ... I wouldn't be able to move, to speak, or even to see. In these situations people's faces would disintegrate, and I would feel like I was going to explode. I would just disappear (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 53).

She became very distrusting of males. By eighth grade she protected herself by putting up an invisible barrier and isolating herself from those around her. She avoided "everyone possible and [pretended] no one existed" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 53). She immersed in philosophy as a means to figure out people, morality, and life.

She approached her freshman year of high school with new hope. She believed her new knowledge of philosophy would enable her to enter into scholarly conversations at this new higher level of education. On the first day of school she was challenged by an older boy who asked her if she was queer. He had heard of her sexual encounters in junior high and of her resultant aversion to men. "I wasn't interested in men; I had really had it with them trying to touch me all the time ... I preferred the company of females." Her developing morality and thinking led her to evaluate the definition of queer and answer honestly, expecting a rational conversation to take place. Instead the boy hit her and repeated challenged her to continue to admit that she was queer. "I was labeled a fagot and had that stigma flung on top of the heap ... high school was downhill from there" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 54-55).

Her mask-like facial expression, her difficulty with social interaction, in addition to her enhanced sensitivity led to extreme anxiety and interfered with her ability to interact with others or to concentrate on school work. Prince-Hughes describes the experience:

I stood out as a freak ... my tics, my monologues, my sensitivities, my imperviousness to criticism and suspicion of authority, my disdain for connection and avoidance of social interaction, my ... convictions, my obsessions ... my odd style of dressing and speaking all led to total ostracism and active aggression (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 60).

I tried new ways to get through the days. I imagined that no one existed in the school so thoroughly that people literally disappeared from my sight. With my eyes fixed straight ahead and focused on nothing, I would wander the halls, seeing them empty, quiet, hallowed. I became unable to hear my teachers and would be speechless when they called on me.

People would corner me in the bathroom and force my head into the toilet, slam me into my locker, and throw trash at me in the hall. They hit me in the head with books and spit on me. Once (they) made a sign with a derogatory word on it and hung it around my neck. I didn't take it off ... because they had no power over me ... their thoughts about me ... and the ways they treated me were all as real as the sign, and I couldn't take them off. Once a thought or action has taken shape, it is real forever (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 60-61)

She described increasing frustration with school situations and situations with her peers. Her grades declined and she found herself with failing grades in every class. She left high school at the age of sixteen and moved to the city to live on her own. She spent the first month alone in a hotel room, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and eating only when food was placed in front of her. After her money ran out she lived on the street. Her autistic inability to interact prevented her from becoming part of the 'street family' and

benefiting from their mutual protection and sharing of food and shelter. She describes the experiences of feeling alone and unsafe in her ongoing rhythm of contentment-disharmony:

Being homeless is more difficult for autistic people ... most homeless people ... have the advantage of weaving together a street family wherein they felt relatively safe and knew that others were going to help them find food, shelter, and a sense of belonging ... it is hard to describe the loneliness of being autistic and homeless. It is bad enough trying to deal with one's sensory overload and different reality when one has a constant safe place. I think being homeless over those times was as close to hell as I can imagine (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 69-70).

Although she had never participated in sports because of the intense interaction required to play on a team, she found herself drawn from the streets into a night club. Prince-Hughes describes glimpses of contentment experienced through the liberating expression of dance, "For some reason, where noise and light had caused me pain before, the flashing and throbbing of the clubs pushed me deep into myself. I knew the freedom of self-expressive movement and could dance alone all night" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 71). She was observed dancing in one of the nightclubs and was offered an opportunity to dance in an exotic strip club. This allowed her to get off the streets and to "spend a great deal of time exploring myself [through dance] that I had long ago abandoned." Although she was clumsy in her movements, dancing was an activity that enabled her to experience calm amidst the disorder. She learned about people by watching them and reflecting on how her interactions affected them and how they responded back to her.

Several years after Prince-Hughes began dancing in the club she decided to spend a day at a zoo. She describes a feeling of being at ease with the animals and could relate to them, especially the gorillas. She eventually began volunteering in the gorilla house. Through spending time and connecting with the gorillas was able to reflect on the gorilla's interactions with each other as well as with her. She describes the brief glimpse of contentment she felt when she was with the gorillas, and how those glimpses inspired hope for enduring contentment. She wrote:

[The gorillas] regarded me. I was too full and floating to regard them in return; instead I stood, transfixed and overflowing, feeling honored and filled with their ancient gazes. Every time I entered [the gorilla office] I closed my eyes to drink up the deep and wonderful spring that flowed into my senses ... Often I would lie in the nests I built for them and close my eyes to ride on the cloud of smells, sights, sounds, and feelings around me. I felt secure. I felt like nothing better could happen to me (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 109-110).

These gorillas, so sensitive and so trapped, were mirrors for my soul as it struggled behind bars, gawked at by the distorted faces of my world, taken out of a context that was meaningful and embracing. They taught me songs about themselves, about meaning and context, about the world, and about me" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 3).

Over the years she began to experience a sense of understanding and feeling understood in the midst of not understanding and not feeling understood.

Because gorillas are subtle and nonthreatening, I was able to look at them, to watch them, in ways I had never been able to do with human people. Through this

process I learned that persons are more than chaotic knots of random actions; I learned that they have feelings, needs for one another, and valuable perspectives, and that as people we are reflected in one another. Because the gorillas were so like me in so many ways, I was able to see myself in them, and in turn I saw them – and eventually myself – in other human people (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 3).

[The gorillas] didn't look at one another, they didn't look at me. Instead they looked at everything. They were so subtle and steady that I felt like I was watching people for the first time in my whole life, really watching them, free from acting, free from the oppression that comes with brash and bold sound, the blinding stares and uncomfortable closeness that mark the talk of human people” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, pp. 91-93).

The gorillas ... needed [personal] space around them ... I became aware of the intricate dances they did together in order to remain intact in the group individually while keeping a bubble of private spirit around them. ... All the time they would stay just so close and just so far. I understood this way of being, but I could never find other people who understood its rules. It was as if human people had lost the ability to dance to this music. So my looking away seemed strange, my walking by people without seeing them, my crossing the street to go around them. To me this was as natural and old a way of being as heartbeats (Prince-Hughes, 2004, pp. 56-57).

She believes that spending time with the gorillas helped her to learn certain social skills that helped her interact with the zoo staff, enhancing a sense of belonging:

I knew to smile at them when I saw them. I knew how to ... show interest in their lives by asking questions. I learned to show them a face that demonstrated sincerity and concern: I would consciously knit my eyebrows together and nod as they told me their troubles (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 104).

Although Prince-Hughes was surprised by her increasing ability to communicate with people, she remained uncomfortable with the interactions. She remained unable to maintain eye contact, obsessively cleared her throat when engaging in conversation, and often contributed inappropriately to conversations. She relished the feeling of being understood, the rhythmical pattern of contentment-frustration continued to shift. She describes feeling more content amid ongoing struggles living amid other humans. Contentment rose for Prince-Hughes gradually and intermittently in the context of being much mistreated and misunderstood. Although conversation remained difficult, she found she was engaging in a more satisfying manner with the zoo staff, “they understood not only what I was trying to say in real social situations by what I wanted to do with my life” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 101).

Self-taught and self-educated by necessity, her drive to understand and find meaning led to Prince-Hughes’s improved process of communicative engagement and an increasing understanding of what she was and was not capable of in her situation of Asperger’s. She made plans to obtain a college degree. With the assistance of people at the zoo, she was able to find programs that were willing to allow her to work on her bachelor’s degree through a mentoring situation. Through the same type of mentoring situation, she was able to earn a master’s degree and then a doctorate in interdisciplinary anthropology. She spent years observing the primates and reflecting on their methods of

social interaction. Through working and interacting with the primates, she learned to work and interact with humans and began to develop an enduring sense of contentment.

She developed enough comfort with social interaction that she was able to maintain a position working at the zoo while working on her degrees. During this period of time she met a woman name Tara who became her life partner. Shifting patterns in her rhythm of contentment-disharmony continued to be revealed.

Although she completed her doctoral studies with the highest grades in the school, she had difficulty finding employment teaching in a university. “This was a part of the equation I had never thought about carefully; the need to communicate well and have strong interpersonal interactive skills” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 186). The relationship with her partner Tara contributed to her success in finding a teaching position. Tara worked with Prince-Hughes to develop a better understanding of interaction and interpreting the behavior of others. Tara patiently offered explanations of various comments, interactions, and social mistakes, such as mistakes Prince-Hughes made during the interviewing process:

Though I can choose and prioritize what material I teach without any problem at all, it is difficult for me to know for certain what a search committee is looking for. There are many unwritten rules in writing an application and the requisite cover letter ... it’s clear from my resume that I’m qualified and how I got that way. They probably want to know who I am, since we will have to work together for many years if I’m hired. Based on this ... I will complete a very personal and inappropriate cover letter (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 221-222).

She accepted that her situation with Asperger's created difficulties obtaining employment as a tenured faculty member. She realized and accepted her limitations, "as the river does not curse its banks" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 186); she instead chose to focus on writing to share her story with others who live with the often difficult situation of Asperger's. She was eventually able to secure an adjunct position teaching at the university level, focusing on research and mentoring students in one-on-one situations, particularly students who live with similar situations of autism. She has found value in having a name (Asperger's) to explain the challenges and experiences she lives with, because it promotes a sense of self-acceptance and belonging to a group of others living with similar difficult situations:

The restoration of spirit that I achieved through belonging ... to a group of people like myself ... is no different for autistic people than it is for all other people who need companionship. It is this sense of companionship that validates one's experiences from afar. It is crucial for our sense of well-being and the awakening of our potential. But is it also ... essential for our emergence (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 33).

She is comfortable with her position at the university, and although it is not without difficulty, she believes she is among people who value and respect her for her capabilities. She says, "My life and career have grown into something I could never have dreamed of so many years ago" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 213).

In the language of humanbecoming theory (Parse, 1998) Prince-Hughes can be described as exploring her living rhythmical patterns of contentment-disharmony. She reflected on her feeling of disconnect with affection and the acceptance she experienced

among the primates. She reflected on how her experiences with the primates gave rise to feeling content while struggling to understand her own emotions with humans. She discovered that choices have consequences, and she is capable of making choices that consequent contentment. Perhaps she is not capable of doing things in a traditional manner, or everything she would like to do, but she is content knowing that she now experiences more moments in which she feels cared for, feels loved, feels respected, feels listened to, feels understood, feels happy, feels peaceful, feels serene, is able to feel close, unburdened, trust, and experience intimacy, and that she is valued and is reaching her full potential as she continues to make choices that lead toward contentment. Although she continues to live with the difficult situation of Asperger's syndrome, the many meaning moments she has experienced have led to the realization of a contented quality of life.

Prince-Hughes describes this feeling as

Lying in the silent dark in the arms of a mighty and compassionate god ... this is what it is to not be alone in the vastness of the space we hurtle through among the coldness and the dying. This is what it is to live" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 6).

"It's like knowing a song so well, you don't have to think it to sing it, and all the while other people hear it and think it's beautiful (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 222).

For Prince-Hughes, this is lived experience of contentment.

Contentment in Meaning Moments

Specific references to contentment were expressed throughout the text.

Impressions of the universal lived experience of contentment-disharmony were revealed with explicit artistic depiction. The overall impression that emerged is that contentment is glimpsed with the fleeting passage of meaning moments and the ever merging of

moment-to-moment day-to-day horizons. It is in the lingering presence of memories past and hope for the not-yet. It is revealed as moments of adversity are lived with peace and peaceful moments are lived with adversity all-at-once. It is revealed as people make moment-to-moment choices in the day-to-day living that is their quality of life. It is the quality of life that all humans hope for.

Glimpses of contentment were revealed in moments of pleasure that enabled rhythms of love, caring, closeness, and laughing, for example, as Prince-Hughes described the situation of walking in the woods with her mother. Contentment was glimpsed in momentary pleasures, such as eating Alka Seltzer, smelling purple irises and band-aids, sucking on burnt match heads, and looking at the color turquoise, “I gazed enraptured at the items in my world that were this color” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 24). Contentment was glimpsed in the moment-to-moment feelings of being loved and cared for by her parents and grandparents, and then later in her life by her partner Tara. Glimpses were revealed in moments of feeling understood by an uncle who held her in a manner that was comforting and non-threatening, by her mother as she put the security stone in her pocket on the first day of kindergarten, and by the teacher in fifth grade who allowed her to separate from the bullying children on the playground. She experienced glimpses of contentment as she experienced feeling listened to and understood by her partner Tara, the staff at the zoo, and the faculty at the university. She saw fleeting glimpses of contentment as she enjoyed the momentary pleasures of serenity and peace while riding on the back of the Morgan horse and lying in the snow looking up at the stars: “I would lie in the snow and look up at the stars and wish I were floating in space where there was infinite room, nothing to touch my body, no sound, no light, no people”

(Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 56), dancing to the light and sounds of the nightclub, and laying in the gorilla nest at the zoo. Glimpses of contentment were revealed as she experienced feeling unburdened through receiving an official diagnosis of Asperger's and through the aesthetic expression of writing the living rhythms of her autobiography. She saw glimpses of feeling respected as her fellow employees at the zoo valued her work, through engagements with her partner and son, as Jane Goodall honored her work with the gorillas, as fellow anthropologists and faculty members value her research, and as fellow humans living with Asperger's value the sharing of her story. Prince-Hughes valued all of these individual moments of feeling "full and floating" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 109) as she lived the ongoing rhythm of contentment-disharmony and continued to hope and strive for a contented quality of life.

References to contentment prevailed throughout the entire text. From a humanbecoming perspective, contentment is a paradoxical rhythm with disharmony. This paradox was suggested through the expression of many situations and meaning moments throughout the text, such as the first day of kindergarten when she described feeling "hollow, and the world lost is sound" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 35). Giving her mother the smooth stone she picked up from the ground was a way of extending the feeling of being loved and feeling close across the distance of space and time, at the same time she was feeling anxious, sad, and without hope: "Perhaps my mother understood this, too, for she took the pebble. I was thinking as loudly as I could that I loved her, that I wanted to go home, and that I knew my wish was hopeless" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 36). She described feeling "sadness beyond description" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 35). She said she "felt like a prisoner about to walk into confinement, not to emerge for a very long

time” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 36). She often described feeling as if she were in a cage or a prisoner. In first grade she expressed feeling “further from home and safety” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 37). In second grade she expressed rhythms of loss and hope in a poetic response to the loss of a cherished possession:

Well I really loved it but
now, it is gone so next
time
I
See
it my name
wont be Dawn

(misspelled words were corrected by the researcher)

(Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 39)

As she wrote the poem, she was thinking about dying, “I hasten to say I was not contemplating suicide. I was thinking of the eventual rest of death and hoping that heaven might be a place where nothing changes” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 39). Contentment-disharmony was very graphically described in telling the third grade situation in which she said the “threatening and disembodied pieces of my teacher swirled around me, attacking from every angle. I was caught in a whirlwind of horrible sensory information and unrelenting criticism” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 42-43). She described the feeling as making her “mind swim ... I needed my mother and knew that this demon [teacher], in the form of flying, taunting parts, had the power to keep her from me” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 43). She often described feeling as if she were in a cage or in prison, or as if she

was dying, “My heart would pound, my ears would ring, and my whole consciousness would go hollow” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 20). The rhythm of loneliness was expressed with another poem written while Prince-Hughes was in the third grade:

The Streets were hot
and The smell of smog
burned my lungs and
throat. The honking and
shouting bellowed and
hurt my ears. I said
hello to people, but
they glanced blankly
at me and went on. The buildings
Tower and look down
on me

(Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 44)

Another expression of contentment-disharmony was written regarding a string of moments culminating in a situation during a junior high school music class. One girl was being rude and disrespectful and the incident turned into a physical encounter between the girl and the teacher. The teacher dragged the girl, kicking and screaming out of the class room. Prince-Hughes describes her reaction, “The classroom exploded in laughter. The lights suddenly pierced me with their blinding whiteness, the cheers and laughter pounded against my ears, the field of my vision dissolved, and the last thing I remember is falling to the floor” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 51).

Disharmony dominated Prince-Hughes's rhythmical pattern of living until the fifth grade, when she experienced a short period of contentment as a result of a special teacher allowing her to engage in activities during the school day that enabled more pleasurable meaning moments in which she talks about feeling listened to and understood by her teacher at school. However, the contentment was short-lived as her parents made the decision to leave Illinois and search for land in the Rocky Mountains. Prince-Hughes would be leaving everything she was familiar with and the grandparents and teacher who offered her the feelings of being loved, cared for, understood and respected. She expressed her feelings toward the situation, "any one of these things – losing grandparents, moving ..., giving up possessions, traveling without a specific goal – can lead to a complete breakdown. I still think of that turn of events as the most traumatic in my life" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 48).

Another expression of the living rhythm of contentment-disharmony revealed feelings of loneliness, sadness, and fear:

I'm so far away from home,
In many more ways than one,
It's been so long since I've felt loved,
That even my longing is lonely.
And for every pair of friends I see,
And every hungry dog,
I can see my shadow linger,
Because I live in a shadow box ...
Shadows of fear,

Shadows of love,
Of times I held up my pride,
Of times I was sick,
And cold ...
But shadows pass to forget the pain,
Just like a camera never captures the sadness,
I'll live in my shadow box,
Like a hungry dog.
(Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 68)

Several creative expressions described a sense of disharmony arising from loneliness, anger, and disorder:

I have many times seen no end in sight to the eternal drifting through cold space in a ship out of control, without the comfort of a living mirror for my soul or the warmth of a companion who loves me because she understands me (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 86).

And

I was always caught up in the swirl of sound, color, smell, and feeling that whipped my mind forward and then my body followed. People and events were something to survive, during which there was no rest to plan, to meditate, to have opinions or desires about the future (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 91-92).

Many of Prince-Hughes' relatives experience the same situation of living with Asperger's. She would always feel a building sense of anger after being with a young nephew who had received an official diagnosis and was benefiting from the

understanding that surrounds having a name put to the situation. He received special assistance at school. Others in his life understood his unusual behaviors and special needs. Prince-Hughes described the anger and hopelessness she felt as “being scared to death by thin air ... then feel the crushing weight of being buried by everything” She explained her anger as “like being in a car that had lost its brakes and looking on in horror as I mowed down pedestrian after pedestrian” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 171-172).

Several times throughout the text, reference was made to special alternative worlds. These alternative worlds were a means of exploring her living rhythm of contentment-disharmony. She describes feelings of warmth, comfort, and safety as she engaged with alternative worlds. She described glimpses of contentment with the solitude and safety of secret hiding places, such as behind the furnace, in the woods, or in a tunnel under the road in front of her house. She described feeling “completely at ease” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 39) in these hiding places. “I understood hiding. It was the only way to keep from bleeding on the snow” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 125). She replicated an early tribal settlement in the woods and spent the summer of her seventh year fantasizing about whether the special feeling (of contentment) she had in this place could ever be real for her.

She talked about being terrified of clothing mannequins and finding safety hiding deep inside the racks of soft dark clothing. Darkness created an atmosphere that allowed her to feel safe and close to her family while maintaining the physical distance she needed for comfort:

I stayed with my grandparents on the weekends, and those were my favorite times. I did feel safe there. At the age of four I quietly sneaked outside at night ...

and made my way around the house to look in the windows. I loved to watch the people I loved, doing the normal tasks that make a life; my grandfather would be cooking at the stove, my grandmother washing dishes in the sink, my sister playing in the living room, my uncle, mother, and father talking about politics. When they didn't see me, when we were divided by walls and glass, I could let my love for them pour out freely in the safety of the dark (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 21-22).

Another alternative world in which Prince-Hughes could explore her living rhythm of contentment-disharmony took place inside the purple cup of root beer. She explored contentment-disharmony as she freely expressed herself through dance, leaping across the stage like a wild animal, "I would often get lost in my secret animal universe and forget that customers came to see me as a dancer and not as an endangered species" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 73).

Being with the gorillas in their habitat brought forth alternative world memories of her childhood: "When I went to the zoo for the first time, after a long period of homelessness and desire, it became my secret world, like my early purple root beer world" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 21). She described the comfortable feeling of being with the gorillas as:

... looking without looking, understanding without speaking. Writing poetry in our living, and reading it like weaving ... It was ... about feeling safe and calm. It was as if I was going there to take deep breaths, each a week apart and deeper each time; taking in and letting out in a rhythm that was as slow and ancient as time itself (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 93-94).

Writing about the zoo and the glimpses of contentment it brought helped transform her rhythm of contentment-disharmony:

I began to understand ... a silence came to live here ... I looked at the evidence of life as if I were walking trails with my eyes through wild book and paper, weaving understanding between words written in the dust, words written in eyes, making paths between glass and gorilla, reclaiming my home among persons (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 94).

Exploring the living rhythm of contentment-disharmony in the alternated worlds of her imagination was a way for Prince-Hughes to develop an understanding of how to make moment-to-moment choices and hope for contentment. She developed a better understanding of the living rhythm of contentment-disharmony and the choices, consequences, and interconnectedness surrounding anger, concern, caring, humor, protectiveness, love, and acceptance.

Contentment intertwined with humanbecoming was powerfully expressed throughout the text. The text is an aesthetic journey through the memories of Prince-Hughes past, the transformation of her process of choosing in the present, and explicit and subtle hope for the future. She developed a better understanding of past-present-future horizons and how they relate moment-to-moment, “The future was, for all intents and purposes, completely undeveloped. If something was one way at the moment, I couldn’t imagine it any other way” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 84). A fight with a partner seemed in her mind to mean that fights occur indefinitely. Sadness in the moment felt like sadness would be forever. Feelings of panic, anger, and failure often evolved through this sense of foreverness. “It was always very frightening to think I would feel angry forever,

or sad forever, or confused forever” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 218). Similarly, she has learned to realize the consequences of taking things literally, such as teasing. Though she continues to experience difficulty translating these situations, she is aware of the consequences and has learned to adapt her choices in the moment to affect the not-yet.

Exploring and reflecting on her past, along with fleeting glimpses of contentment she was rewarded with in her developing understanding, opened her to the notion of illimitable possibles within her situation of Asperger’s, “I knew what it is like to be in a prison. I knew because I was looking at it now with one foot outside the door, knowing the other would always remain inside. I wanted to know myself” (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 96). She expressed her transformed vision of past, present, and future horizons, and the view of illimitable possibles with another poem:

The door is open ...
I know this is so,
Because I heard its weary hinges
telling of the pain, the pain
That is felt
When a very old door is opened
in your heart,
And it is a wonder,
Many do not hear
The weary hinges creak,
When one has opened

The door

(Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 107).

Prince-Hughes' understanding of the living rhythm of contentment-disharmony transformed as it evolved moment-to-moment day-to-day. She developed a better understanding of what she needed to feel contentment. She needed to feel calm, loved, and valued. When she felt calm she was more aware of the choices she made moment-to-moment. She described the beginning awareness of this transformation by writing:

I generally felt more calm in my life, because I spent so much time with the gorillas; they made me feel calm ... I was beginning to have more social success; this led to less tension for me when I was in social situations, and that in turn enabled me to relax and read people better ... I learned on a new level that though I had understood what fear and anxiety felt like on a gut level, I now began to understand other, more complex emotions (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 137).

She described the contentment she hoped to discover in feeling loved:

I wanted someone to help me forget where I was; to help me let go. I wanted to be in love with one special someone and give them my heart and my life between breaths and between heartbeats. I wanted to close my eyes and lose myself, to give in and give myself over to someone who loved me, really loved me for me. I wanted to see God. I wanted to see God in the face of my lover, in my own body for a few brief moments ... All they would have needed to do was to touch my hand gently and mean it sincerely (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 87).

Prince-Hughes' feeling at home with the primates expanded to human habitats in the academic world. She describes the feeling of being valued at the university as feeling at home:

Thankfully I have found a home in the academy. It has placed me among people who are often open to the bright and eccentric, to the new and different, and who are interested in perceiving and experiencing. My involvement in the university had allowed me to thrive in an atmosphere where thinking is foundational to living (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 220-221).

Dr. Prince-Hughes described the originating of her transforming, "I breathed. I began to wake up. I stretched and yawned in the soul I had forgotten, and the waking took months and years ... sometimes I was filled with joy and I wanted to shout" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 94).

She writes of the moment-to-moment rhythms of living:

I have heard other autistic adults say that, despite islands of happiness in their childhood, isolation, confusion, and depression underlay even the best memories; it wasn't until adulthood that they realized there were many good things about their uniqueness. I enjoy my life more and more as I mature (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 179-180).

Prince-Hughes described her understanding of contentment-disharmony and consequences in relation to choices to be made within her situation of Asperger's syndrome with the phrase, "the river doesn't curse the banks" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 186). Through this expression she is demonstrating that she does not curse the limitations her situation with Asperger's presents in relation to the consequences of her choosing.

Her understanding of her situations and limitations leads to a better understanding of choosing contentment with the living rhythm of contentment-disharmony.

Emerging Meanings

This hermeneutic quest through the text of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism* has illuminated meanings of contentment not discovered through the review of literature. The most prominent meaning that emerged in this study is that although contentment is a universally lived experience, it exists at a higher level of phenomenal complexity; contentment-disharmony unfolds over time, in the midst of arduous situations, as humans give meaning to the moment-to-moment experiences of day-to-day living. Prince-Hughes described her experience of writing as an:

aesthetic wonder of cutting and tracing the lines of one's thoughts and feelings into the steady lines of permanent letters ... words crossing so many gaps, paintings of tiny landscapes – their horizons tracing out in the mountain ranges of sentences and the strata of paragraphs ... there we find ... a land we can share (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 26).

Deeper understandings of the meaning of contentment were discovered and brought forward from the depths of this landscape. One of these understandings is that the rhythm of contentment-disharmony evolves with moment-to-moment day-to-day choices. Contentment-disharmony is inextricably intertwined with the many meaning moments that humans live all-at-once in situations with which they live and choose. Humans hope for contentment as they journey forward, living with situations that are challenging or mundane, enduring or fleeting, unyielding or yielding. Although some situations are not yielding, there always remains the freedom to choose within and with

other situations to affect contentment in quality of life. Choosing affects moment-to-moment phenomenal experiences of serenity, feeling loved, feeling understood, feeling happy, feeling listened to, feeling close, feeling unburdened, feeling cared for, feeling peaceful, feeling respected, and trusting while holding onto hope as one perseveres through difficult times, persisting while wanting to change the quality of one's life. Some choices are arduous, others are without challenge. Insights gained through this hermeneutic journey reveal that although humans live many experiences in many situations, the courage to be open to the illimitable choices that are possible, and move forward and live the consequences of those personal choices, has the potential to realize contentment.

Prince-Hughes lived moment-to-moment paradoxical phenomenal rhythms, with persistent hope for contentment in the enduring arduous situation of Asperger's, as well as the many other calm-turbulent situations in her day-to-day living, while giving rise all-at-once to contentment-disharmony. Meaning evolved as Prince-Hughes confirmed-did not confirm value priorities that manifested humanbecoming in her languaging of speaking-being silent and moving being still. The choosing that took place all-at-once moment-to-moment day-to-day presented consequences to dwell upon for insight, understanding, and further choosing and continued evolution of meaning. Consequences of feeling loved-not loved, understood-not understood, happy-not happy, listened to-not listened to, close-not close, unburdened-burdened, cared for-not cared for, peaceful-not peaceful, respected-not respected, trusting-not trusting, as well as hope-no hope all-at-once confirmed-did not confirm the illimitable possibles for further choosing. These consequences were explicitly-tacitly manifested through kind words, harsh words, cruel

words, endearing words, harmful gestures, soothing gestures, comforting gestures, physical postures, and threatening gestures from family members, school peers, teachers, fellow employees, friends, acquaintance, mentors, and friends. Some were also revealed through responses to activities such as writing, arranging and categorizing cherished possessions, loss, and dance, observing the gorillas, as well as realizing that the choices she made had consequences, and she could choose accordingly. Each phenomenal consequence led to another moment, another choosing, another consequence, and evolving meaning of choices to be made. Valuing contentment emerged with Prince-Hughes's humanbecoming and evolving worldview. Valuing consequences of her moment-to-moment choosing confirmed-did not confirm choices to be made in moment-to-moment day-to-day situations.

Contentment arose with Prince-Hughes's developing unique rhythm of humanbecoming in the humanuniverse process. As she explicitly-implicitly lived enabling-limited connecting-separating in the all-at-once from situations, activities, and others, her living rhythmical pattern of contentment-disharmony flowed forward with time and continuously reflected the growing realization of the consequential effect of choices she made. As she contemplated the consequences of her choices in situations, she made choices that connected her with certain others, situations, and activities while separating her from other situations, activities, and others. While she separated from certain situations, such as the high school, she enabled other situations, such as leaving home. Separating-connecting in situations is separating-connecting with feelings and emotions experienced with those situations. As she separated from the loneliness and lack of respect experienced in the school she was connecting with the possibility of not being

lonely and not feeling a lack of respect. As she chose to leave home she moved forward and connected with the experiences surrounding being without a home, such as loneliness and not feeling cared for and not feeling loved at the same time as she separated from the experiences surrounding living in her home with her family: being cared for and being loved. Her world-view and meaning of contentment were continually being shaped through the consequences of her choices, and she moved forward. She made the choice to separate from her self-imposed isolation from others and connected-separated from others while with the situation of dancing in the night club. Through the process of connecting with dancing in the nightclub she disconnected from the feeling of anxiety and all-at-once connected with the feeling of serenity she experienced in the moment of dancing with the bright lights and loud throbbing music. Through the process of connecting-separating with the exotic dancers and patrons of the club she connected-separated with strangers and close others while enabling-limiting her possibles. As she separated from her fear of venturing out on her own she all-at-once connected with the courage of getting on the bus and visiting the zoo. Another situation of connecting-separating involved connecting with her partner Tara and separating from being alone, thereby connecting with feeling loved, cared for, listened to, understood, and respected and all-at-once separating from not feeling loved, not feeling cared for, not feeling listened to, and not feeling understood. She experienced these feelings of feeling loved, cared for, listened to, understood, and respected by Tara while all-at-once not feeling loved or cared for or understood by others. As she made moment-to-moment choices she connected or separated from certain situations, activities, or experiences and all-at-once enabled some and limited others. Through enabling-limiting she revealed some consequences and concealed others,

thereby limiting some rhythms of contentment-disharmony and enabling others. The moment-to-moment day-to-day choices she connected-separated from enabled-limited and revealed-concealed ongoing rhythms of contentment-dissonance. Through separating from certain choices and all-at-once connecting with others, her transforming world view and changing process of choice-making tipped the rhythmical balance in favor of contentment.

Through making choices Prince-Hughes was choosing her way of being. Through the process of humanbecoming she continues to image, value, and language meaning in her existence, realizing the meaning that contentment reveals. Meaning was revealed in the choices she made to achieve contentment. As Prince-Hughes moved forward with the moment-to-moment day-to-day choices to consequent contentment, she moved forward with certainty-uncertainty. In some ways she experienced feeling wanted as she explored new ways of being with others.

Further complicating the choice-making process involves the issue of conforming-not conforming. Because she lived with the difficult situation associated with Asperger's, she realized she was different from others around her. Although she longed to be more like her peers as she was growing up, she also wanted to be herself. She realized the meaning of living different levels of abilities than most around her. She realized that choices others made lived out certain consequences. She realized that she was not able to experience the same choice-consequence patterns as others she witnessed, so nonconforming was a choice she made in certain choice-making situations. She originated a new and unique choice-consequence pattern-process which enabled her to transcend the paradoxes of certainty-uncertainty and conforming-not conforming, being

open to imaging new possibles for choice-consequence. She eventually learned to value her uniqueness as well as her choice-consequence pattern. Every moment of every day of her life was an originating of transforming while confirming-not confirming what she valued through her unique explicit-tacit languaging of being still-moving and speaking-being silent while connecting-separating in moment-to-moment day-to-day choosing that enables-limits with certainty-uncertainty while conforming-not conforming with what is familiar-not familiar. Transforming her choice-making to consequent in a way that enabled her to conform to her situation with Asperger's while not conforming with the choice-consequent and contentment situation of others enabled her to transform her view of contentment with humanuniverse. She said she no longer wanted a cure; the situation of Asperger's contributed to who she had become as a human being. The certainty-uncertainty moving forward while conforming-not conforming with what is familiar-not familiar in the moment-to-moment day-to-day choice-consequent process reveals an ongoing originating of transforming the meaning of contentment while living humanuniverse.

Certain ideas of contentment emerged from this hermeneutic study and answer the research question: What is the structure of the lived experience of contentment?

- Contentment is uncovering meaning not previously lived
- Contentment is an enduring way of being still with situations
- Contentment is a sense of peace and calm amid turbulence
- Contentment arises while choosing in the all-at-once
- Contentment is distinct but not independent from lower level phenomena, such as happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction

- Contentment-disharmony is a rhythm of collective meaning moments
- Contentment-disharmony is acknowledged over time through calm-turbulent meaning moments
- Contentment-disharmony is moving forward while choosing-relinquishing all-at-once
- Contentment-disharmony is moving forward with visualizing new possibles
- Contentment-disharmony is moving forward with inspiring hopes and dreams
- Contentment is unburdened lightness arising while moving forward
- Contentment-disharmony is moving forward choosing-relinquishing with visualizing new possibles.
- Contentment-disharmony, then, is enduring serenity unfolding with inspiring unburdening as cherished convictions arise amid arduous situations
- Contentment is enduring serenity unfolding with inspiring unburdening as cherished convictions arise amid disharmony.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF EMERGENT MEANINGS AND RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of humanbecoming hermeneutic research is to uncover new knowledge about lived experiences. New knowledge about lived experiences contributes to the knowledge base of nursing. New knowledge about contentment from this study sheds light on ways in which contentment is lived moment-to-moment day-to-day. Contentment-disharmony is an inherent paradoxical rhythm of human living. This study suggests that contentment is enduring serenity unfolding with inspiring unburdening as cherished convictions arise amid disharmony.

Enduring serenity is consistent with feeling peaceful in several nursing studies. Ravari (2009) found that the Iranian nurses in her study articulated a sense of feeling peaceful through the expression of their spirituality while engaging with their patients. Tarko (2002) found that individuals living with schizophrenia were able to find a sense of peace through the expression of spirituality. In the humanbecoming literature, Parse (2001) found that contentment is a satisfying calmness that emerges as a good and peaceful feeling as well as a sense of fulfilling tranquility (Parse, 2001). These findings were supported in Baumann's (2003) Parse Research Method study in which adolescent girls described feeling tired as feeling peaceful. Contentment arose elsewhere in the literature as a sense of calm and tranquility (philology: Murray, et al., 1961; philosophy: Griswold, 1996), peace (theology: Abohav, 1982; behavioral science: Adams, 1969; sociology: Gray, et al., 2006), serenity (the arts: Dempsey, 2004; Twain, 1961), and

pleasure (philosophy: Bahm, 1974; Carson, 1981; Flowers, 1957; Nietzsche, et al., 1969; Singer, 1936; behavioral science, Freud). Additionally, contentment was revealed as a sense of harmony (theology: Gaskin, 1999) or balance (behavioral science: Grac, 1971), meaning one is relieved of the disharmony associated with uneasiness (philology: Murray, et al., 1961), anxiety (philosophy: Bahm, 1968), and tension (the arts: Harris, 1980).

Contentment as an enduring state is linked with findings in the nursing literature as the Iranian nurses reported feeling an overarching sense of enduring contentment with nursing through their many spiritual encounters of caring for patients (Ravari, 2009). One of the participants in Parse's (2001) study on contentment described being "content with her life, even when anticipating a drastic change" (Parse, 2001, p. 198). Contentment as an enduring state is tangentially linked with the theological literature. Buddhist enlightenment potentiates contentment through achieving perfect balance and harmony, an everlasting state that is only possible when one is free from any sort of need. However, this state of harmonic contentment is only feasible in death (Gaskins, 1999; Rahula, 1994). Christianity and Judaism recognize contentment as an enduring state achievable during life on earth through developing, valuing, and living a spiritual relationship with God (Abohav, 1982; Greenfield & Marks, 2007; Fite, 2007; Herbart, 2001; Kadden, 2001; Mathew, 2004; 2006; 2008; Stewart, 2009).

Cherished convictions were realized for Prince-Hughes as she freely chose in situations and lived the consequences of her choosing moment-to-moment day-to-day. Through reflection on the many meaning moments in which she engaged with others and transformed her manner of communication and social interaction, she began to realize her

pattern of choice-consequence. Her attitude toward engaging with others transformed as she experienced glimpses of contentment. Glimpses of contentment were experienced through multiple individual encounters and feelings of being listened to and understood, cared for, loved, and valued. Her concept of what was most cherished was illuminated and she was able to choose from her hierarchy of value priorities. Choosing what is most cherished in relation to contentment was not evident in the nursing literature, however is consistent with findings throughout the theological literature. Theological teachings reinforce that moderation of worldly goods in favor of a cherished relationship with a Supreme Being will lead to contentment. People choose what is most cherished to them. The determination of what is most cherished occurs over time as relationships with others and experiences develop. Value and meaning are assigned as attitudes are developed through experiential encounters. What is most cherished rises hierarchically and takes priority in moment-to-moment day-to-day choosing. Contentment is experienced through engagement with what is most cherished in the hierarchy. Rhythmical patterns of contentment-disharmony are lived as people place meaning and value on attainable-unattainable experiential consequences (Gaskin, 1999; Rahula, 1994).

What is most valued is confirmed-not confirmed as people live the consequences of their choices; therefore, contentment is a choice-consequence made in moment-to-moment day-to-day situations. This is consistent with Parse's (2001) description of resolute liberty; situations in which participants described freely choosing to engage in activities that contributed toward contentment, such as volunteering, dancing, taking care of their home, and participating in social activities (Parse, 2001). The behavioral science literature supports the free choosing of quality of life choices that consequent perceived

well-being, happiness, and contentment (Abrams, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Herbart, 2001). Theologians discuss choosing activities such as self-restraint and moderation in order to be enlightened to what is most valued (Abohav, 1982; Gaskins, 1999; Greenfield & Marks, 2007; Fite, 2007; Herbart, 2001; Kadden, 2001; Mathew, 2004; 2006; 2008; Rahula, 1994; Stewart, 2009). What is most valued is uniquely languaged as people connect-separate from others and situations and conform-do not conform to what is familiar-not familiar in moment-to-moment day-to-day living.

One feeling that Prince-Hughes cherished most was a feeling of belonging, which evolved through multiple engagements of feeling listened to, feeling understood, feeling cared for, and feeling loved. This was consistent with a sense of belonging identified in the sociology literature. A sense of belonging contributed to transformation of attitude for expatriate women (Arieli, 2007) who experienced many meaning moments with other women who shared the experience of being expatriate wives, Chinese immigrants (Lam & Chan, 2004) who looked to family to share feelings of disharmony in their unfamiliar setting, people living in low income neighborhoods who shared similar feelings with their neighbors (Shon, 2007), and African-Americans (Woody & Green, 2001) who shared feelings of racial adversity with others in their situation. The transformation of attitude enabled these people to experience contentment in their difficult situations through engaging with and reflecting on the many meaning moments of being understood by others in similar situations. What is most cherished is inexplicably intertwined with the concept of contentment as an enduring calm. Meaning moments in which people connect-separate from others and situations and confirm-not confirm what is valued are fleeting experiences of being listened to, understood, cared for, and loved. Contentment is an

enduring calm that emerges over time with the many meaning moments in which people confirm-do not confirm what is most valued.

The moment-to-moment choices people engage with have consequences that affect all future moments. Contentment is an overarching choice-consequence that arises with collective phenomenal consequences of moment-to-moment day-to-day choices. Parse's (1996) quality of life study involving people living with Alzheimer's adds support to the notion of contentment resulting through collective meaning moments. The structure of quality of life in that study was "contentment with the remembered and now affiliations that arises amidst the tedium of the commonplace, as an easy-uneasy flow of transfiguring surfaces with liberating possibilities and confining restraints, while desiring cherished intimacies yields with inevitable distancing in the vicissitudes of life, as contemplating the ambiguity of the possible emerges with yearning for successes in the moment" (Parse, 1996, p. 130). Participants reflected and realized contentment in the collective meaning moments of their lives that had consequented in pleasant feelings, such as being with family and friends and engaging in activities. The living rhythm of contentment-disharmony was manifested as the participant's languaged connecting-separating with valued meaning moments. Another humanbecoming study in which contentment was found to arise with collective meaning moments was the hope study in Finland. Hope was found to be the "persistent anticipation of contentment arising with the promise of nurturing affiliations, while inspiration emerges amid easing the arduous" (Toikkanen & Muurinen, 1999, p. 92). The persistent anticipation of contentment is a manifestation of collective experiences and meaning moments in which hope was the humanly lived phenomenal expression. Other humanbecoming studies revealed that

contentment is experienced through moments of laughing (Parse, 1994; Hayden, 2007), listening (Jonas-Simpson, 2003; Jonas-Simpson, et al., 2006; Kagan, 2008), caring (Bunkers, 2004), doing the right thing (Smith, 2006), and serenity (Kruse, 1999).

Contentment as an overarching or higher level phenomenon constructed of multiple meaning moments over time is consistent with the philosophical literature that describes contentment as distinct but not independent from lower level phenomena such as happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction (Flowers, 1957; Rosmini, 1993). Contentment is not a direct emotional attitude toward any single activity or experience. Happiness (Flowers, 1957), pleasure (Carson, 1981; Flowers, 1957; Griswold, 1996), and satisfaction (Marshall, 2000, Shapiro, 2007) are lower level moment-to-moment phenomenon, or subjective attitudes. As these subjective moment-to-moment attitudes occur day-to-day, contentment is realized or reasoned, meaning that the structure of contentment transcends and unites all responses toward lower level experiences to the highest level of abstraction (Griswold, 1996; Kant, 1788b; Nietzsche, et al., 1969). Prince-Hughes reflected on all of her past meaning moments, individually and all-at-once, in order to understand how her individual and collective concrete experiences consequented subjectively. Each moment affected the next moment all-at-once in the present. As the consequences of the cumulative moments were realized in the present her impression of the cumulated moments transcended in her consciousness to value, image, and language contentment. The valuing, imaging, and languaging of contentment is the meaning of contentment as each moment is explicitly-tacitly confirmed-not confirmed and consequences are both disclosed and not disclosed through attending to some and distancing from others. Meaning of each moment all-at-once with contentment was

illuminated moment-to-moment day-to-day with powering and originating transforming humanuniverse.

Inspiring unburdening is generally consistent with Parse's findings that contentment is a satisfying calmness that emerges as a good and peaceful feeling amidst the stressful situations of day-to-day living (Parse, 2001). Prince-Hughes realized that the Asperger's syndrome she lives with day-to-day will not change from a biophysiological perspective. However, her attitude toward other situations in her life could change, such as her manner of making moment-to-moment choices in situations of social interaction and communication, in finding creative solutions to accomplish dreams such as educational degrees and intimate relationship, and finding an alternative to a tenured track position in the university. The findings of this study revealed that humans live stressful situations moment-to-moment; however also revealed that certain situations are ongoing. Judaism and Christianity teach that one should be content with one's situation (Abohav, 1982; Botwinick, 2006; Mathew, 2004; Stewart, 2009). Saint Paul (Fite, 2007) was not joyful about being imprisoned; he found contentment through spreading the word of the gospel to his fellow prisoners. The Menoras Hamoris (Abohav, 1982) teaches that if a person is content with what he or she is given, then that person will have peace of mind. Although behavioral science quality of life instruments are reductionistic in nature, they seek to understand more about human responses to difficult medical situations such as cognitive disabilities and depression; they contribute toward the overall picture of humans living with difficult situations. The story of Kenny, the man living with Down's syndrome, indicates that people can have experiences of feeling safe, understood, valued, respected, and happy in response to moment-to-moment experiences day-to-day, and

these moment-to-moment experiences that are pleasurable day-to-day lead toward contentment.

Although Prince-Hughes lives with the difficult situation of Asperger's, and many of her moments are discordant and chaotic, she has learned to make moment-to-moment choices within the difficult situation to consequent contentment. The definition of contentment from the Oxford English Dictionary states that to be content is "having one's desires bounded by what one has (though that may be less than one wishes); not disturbed by the desire of anything more, or of anything different" (Murray, Bradley, Craigie, & Onion, 1961, p. 898). It is not that Prince-Hughes did not want more. She would have been very happy securing a tenured track position; however, she realized the boundaries of her situation and has developed a greater understanding of how to make choices within her living rhythm of contentment-disharmony.

The findings of this study suggest that contentment-disharmony is a paradoxical rhythm of collective meaning moments over time. This is a meaning of contentment new to the literature. Prince-Hughes expressed paradoxical rhythms of contentment-disharmony throughout the text; she expressed feeling contentment in the midst of disharmonic moments. She was content with her relationship with Tara and her son; however felt disharmonic being in crowded rooms and encountering new experiences. She expressed contentment with her developing art of social interaction, yet expressed disharmonic feelings of anxiety and discomfort at the same time. As she lived moment-to-moment day to day she separated-connected with contentment and disharmony all-at-once. While living the rhythmical pattern of contentment-disharmony, Prince-Hughes was able to acknowledge contentment over time through engagement with both calm and

turbulent meaning moments. Living the rhythmical pattern of contentment-disharmony was evident in the Iranian nurses (Ravari, 2009), who live and work in a chaotic, disturbing atmosphere of war and disrespect. They were able to find contentment in their situation through reviewing and reflecting on the many meaning moments when spirituality was lived with their patients. The suggestion of contentment-harmony as a rhythmical pattern is consistent with the sociological literature, contentment is acknowledged with an evaluation of one's overall life situation (Veenhoven, 1991) and sense of harmony amidst the adversity and pain of restlessness and anxiety (Gaskin, 1999).

From a philosophical perspective, Bahm (1968; 1972; 1974) asserts that liberty, leisure, health, and peace contribute toward contentment, and that to be denied any one of these denies contentment. Disharmony is related to contentment, as disharmony is brought on by changing needs, increasing desire for more, and frustration of not being able to satisfy the desire for more than what one already has (Bahm, 1968; 1972; 1974; Kant, 1788b). Nietzsche (1969) agrees and adds that feeling content leads toward decreased interest and feelings of detachment. However, Singer (1936) suggests that an individual can be content with life in the present, even perfectly content, and still hold hope for the fulfillment of certain goals or aspirations in the future (Singer, 1936). Hope for contentment in any situation is possible; however, one must understand the bounds of one's situation and choose with thoughtful consideration from the illimitable possibles that lead toward contentment.

Prince-Hughes described a transformation of understanding that enabled her to engage with her moment-to-moment choosing-consequent pattern to consequent in

greater feelings of pleasure across collective meaning moments while living with the arduous situation of Asperger's. Reviewing one's moment-to-moment day-to-day experiences is a transformative contentment-disharmonic experience that has the possibility of being a peaceful and accepting way of viewing life in the midst of adversity. This is supported in several nursing studies. Goddard's (2004) study with people who had experienced a traumatic event found that those who viewed past moments in a reflective manner were able to potentiate contentment, therefore allowing them to be open to experiencing a greater sense of peace, love, joy, trust, and compassion in response to moment-to-moment engagements. These findings are consistent with Bickerstaff and associates who found that people living with difficult situations, such as the loss of a spouse, the loss of independence, or a transition to long term care were able to look back over the collective meaning moments of their lives and realize their own personal growth and transformation. These findings are supported by studies in which the researchers discovered that participants were able to transform through difficult situations and experience contentment by reflecting on fond memories of family and personal achievement, and through ongoing pleasurable meaning moments in their current situation (Bickerstaff, et al., 2003; Nilsson, et al., 1996; Steeman, et al., 2007). Similarly, Kiehl and associates (2007) found that young women were able to experience contentment in the disharmonic situation of new motherhood through reflecting on the collective pleasurable meaning moments of engaging with their new babies. In yet another study, individuals living with schizophrenia were able to reflect on their spirituality and remain connected with self, others, and community, therefore transforming their rhythmical patterns to find peace and contentment amidst the

disharmonic chaos of a prevailing sense of disconnection associated with the disease they live with (Tarko, 2002).

In addition to the Parse study in which quality of life was explored with people living with Alzheimer's, several humanbecoming studies reveal that individuals can experience contentment while living with arduous situations. Bournes and Ferguson-Pare (2005) explored the experience of persevering through a difficult time with patients, family members and health care providers involved with the SARS outbreak in Toronto. Although patients were isolated without the physical closeness of their loved ones, families were isolated from sick loved ones and had to wait at a distance, and health care providers experienced being exhausted and feeling at risk, contentment rose with many comforting meaning moments of being informed, feeling understood and cared for, as well as moments of laughing throughout the SARS outbreak situation. Parse (1997) explored the paradoxical rhythms of joy-sorrow with older women and found that although the women lived with difficult situations involving disrupted family relationships, they were able to reflect satisfied contentment through many pleasurable meaning moments in their present living situation. Bunkers (2004) explored the experience of feeling cared for with woman who were living with the economic, social, and interpersonal difficulties of being homeless. The women were able to express feeling contentment through reflecting on many accumulated meaning moments of feeling cared for, as well as feeling safe, warm, listened to, valued, respected, and understood. Baumann (2003) found that teenage girls, who live with the situation of feeling very tired due to the many social, academic, and athletic situations they engage in, are able to experience contentment with meaning moments in which they feel an unburdening of

expected responsibilities, feel comforted, and feel close to others. Finnish people, who often live with depression and experience hopelessness due to their harsh geopolitical situation and long dark winters are able to feel contentment through hope-filled moments (Toikkanen & Muurinen, 1999).

The structure of contentment that rose with this hermeneutic engagement was suggested in Prince-Hughes's aesthetic representation of her many meaning moments lived day-to-day. As her enduring feeling of peace and comfort was revealed, it was inextricably intertwined with the many cumulated meaning moments in which she experienced feeling listened to, understood, cared for, close, loved, respected, and valued. She described laughing and unburdening and a sense of serenity and hope amidst the often discomforting frequently disharmonic and difficult situation of Asperger's syndrome she lives with. As she describes the many meaning moments and the enduring sense of peace and comfort that is contentment, she was describing the quality of life she explicitly-tacitly chose for herself as she lives moment-to-moment day-to-day.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Knowledge Development

The primary finding of this study is that *Contentment is enduring serenity unfolding with inspiring unburdening as cherished convictions arise amid disharmony*. A deeper understanding about contentment was revealed, thereby contributing to the humanbecoming school of thought and the knowledge base of nursing. This deeper understanding of contentment offers new knowledge about contentment-disharmony as a living rhythm of health and quality of life. People choose moment-to-moment day-to-day to express their own meaning of contentment-disharmony, thereby engendering health and quality of life in day-to-day living. Contentment is a chosen quality of life that evolves moment-to-moment day-to-day in patterns of choice-consequence. Choices are the value priorities that humans language through revealing-concealing thoughts, words, expressions, feelings, body movements, and engagement with others and activities. Value priorities are explicitly-tacitly confirmed-not confirmed as human's language meaning. As humans engage with their moment-to-moment day-to-day pattern of choice-consequence they are structuring meaning of contentment, and therefore their quality of life. As humans live rhythms of contentment-disharmony moment-to-moment day-to-day, contentment is glimpsed in pleasurable meaning moments of feeling listened to, understood, cared for, loved, and respected, as well as in moments when they trust and unburden and laugh while all-at-once they experience moments of not feeling listened to, understood, cared for, loved, or respected, as well as when they feel they cannot trust or unburden or laugh. Choice-consequences of contentment-disharmony are enabling-

limiting all-at-once. Humans live rhythmical patterns of contentment-disharmony with certainty-uncertainty as they connect-separate with patterns of choice-consequence and transform humanbecoming. The findings of this study are offered forward to further understanding of humanbecoming and as a stepping-off point for further human science research.

Significance for Nursing

The ontological and epistemological focus of nursing is the humanly lived experience of health and illness. The ontology and epistemology of the humanbecoming school of thought are the humanly lived experience of health and quality of life. The humanbecoming school of thought and the humanbecoming hermeneutic method are consistent with the ontological and epistemological focus of nursing; therefore contribute to the foundation of nursing practice and complete the cycle of theory-research-practice. Knowing and understanding the paradoxes of universally lived human experiences, such as contentment, guides nurses to assist individuals to be open to the illimitable possibilities through which they can ascribe their own meaning to health and determine their own quality of life

Several thoughts emerged through this hermeneutic process. The findings of this study impart a multi-layered understanding about the lived experience of contentment. It is important for nurses to understand the structure of contentment as a chosen quality of life. Nurses engage with people who are faced with arduous enduring situations. It is a responsibility of nurses to help these people understand the arduous situations with which they live and to understand the consequences of choices they make regarding their health and quality of life. Helping people understand the boundaries of the situations with which

they live will help transform the way in which they view their situation, life, and choice-consequent pattern. Transformation of the choice-consequent pattern enables people to move forward making informed choices that have a greater potential to consequent in enduring contentment with their situation and life.

As nurses help people develop a better understanding of the enduring situations with which they live, they help to illuminate the meaning of contentment, help to coconstruct order out of chaos, and help to synchronize cocreated rhythmical patterns of contentment-disharmony and choice-consequence. These transformed cocreations assist the person to cotranscend with new understanding and vision of the possibilities for contentment in the enduring situation with which he or she lives.

The use of published autobiographical text to explore phenomena revealed insights into the sensitive nature of contentment-disharmony that might not have been revealed through face-to-face engagement. Time limitations inherent with interview scheduling pose potential limitations to the depth and quality of information that can be gathered face-to-face. In addition, the unique pattern of communication that individual's with Asperger's experience create another potential issue with the disclosure of personal experience, particularly with face-to-face engagements. A rich source of data lies in the autobiographies that have been written and published by individuals living with Asperger's. It is not known what other knowledge remains unnoticed and unaddressed but has the potential to be revealed through their stories. This humanbecoming hermeneutic method study of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation* provides greater understanding into the lived experiences of persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders. It, like other

humanbecoming studies, helps reveal the problem of stigma associated conditions that continue to block nurse's relationship with persons who are different from themselves.

Recommendations

Although it is not possible to know or understand everything there is to know about contentment, further study would enhance what is already known. Studies focused on the moment-to-moment phenomenal experiences that contribute toward contentment hold the potential to lead toward a deeper understanding of the interconnection of these phenomena with contentment and further enhance knowledge of contentment and quality of life. Additionally, an interesting dimension of contentment could be illuminated through further study of contentment with individuals living with various situations of chronic illness.

Conclusion

The finding of this study, that *contentment is an enduring serenity unfolding with inspiring unburdening as cherished convictions arise amid disharmony* answers the research question: What is the structure of the lived experience of contentment as described in the text of *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey through Autism*. The emergent meanings were revealed through discoursing with penetrating engaging, interpreting with quiescent beholding, and understanding with inspiring visaging (Parse, 2001; 2007) during ongoing author-text engagement with the autobiography artform. New knowledge contributed toward a deeper understanding of contentment as a chosen quality of life as it is viewed through a humanbecoming perspective.

APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1: Humanbecoming Assumptions, Postulates, Principles, Concepts, and Paradoxes

Assumptions	Postulates	Principles	Concepts and Paradoxes
Humanbecoming is freely choosing personal meaning with situation, intersubjectively livening value priorities	Illimitability is the indivisible unbounded knowing extended to infinity, the all-at-once remembering and prospecting with the moment	Structuring meaning is the imaging and valuing of languaging	Imaging: explicit-tacit; reflective-prereflective Valuing: confirming-not confirming Languaging: speaking-being silent; moving-being still
Humanbecoming is configuring rhythmical patterns of relating with humanuniverse	Paradox is an intricate rhythm expressed as a pattern of preference Freedom is contextually construed liberation	Configuring rhythmical patterns of relating is the revealing-concealing and enabling-limiting of connecting-separating	Revealing-concealing: disclosing-not disclosing Enabling-limiting: potentiating-restricting Connecting-separating: attending-distancing
Humanbecoming is cotranscending illimitably with emerging possible.	Mystery is the unexplainable, that which cannot be completely known unequivocally	Cotranscending with possibles is the powering and originating of transforming	Powering: pushing-resisting; affirming-not affirming; being-nonbeing Originating: certainty-uncertainty; conforming-not conforming Transforming: familiar-unfamiliar

(Parse, 2008, p. 1)

Table 2: Suggested Translations from the Writing of Heidegger

Dasein: Being – presence, existence, consciousness
Umwelt: environment; concrete objects in the world; the external world of objects, community, other humans, and time.
Zuhandsein: Being-at-hand – objects in the world as they present themselves prereflectively; access of the Being to the concrete objects in the world
Vorhandsein: Being-on-hand – presence or objectified formation of an object in the world
Mitwelt: outside world
In-der-Welt-sein: Being-in-the-world: an understanding human realizing existence in the world by existing in the world among objects

(Dreyfus, 1991; Guignon and Pereboom, 2001; Spiegelberg, 1982)

Table 3: Humanbecoming Studies in which Contentment is used to describe a Lived Experience

Reference	Phenomenon	Structure of the Lived Experience
Parse, R. R. (1994). Laughing and health: A study using Parse's research method. <i>Nursing Science Quarterly</i> , 7(2), 55-64.	Laughing and health	Laughing and health is a potent buoyant vitality sparked through mirthful engagements, prompting an unburdening delight deflecting disheartenments while emerging with blissful contentment.
Parse, R. R. (1996). Quality of life for persons living with Alzheimer's disease: The human becoming perspective. <i>Nursing Science Quarterly</i> , 9(3), 126-133.	Quality of life	Quality of life is a contentment with the remembered and now affiliations that arises amidst the tedium of the commonplace, as an easy-uneasy flow of transfiguring surfaces with liberating possibilities and confining restraints, while desiring cherished intimacies yields with inevitable distancing in the vicissitudes of life, as contemplating the ambiguity of the possible emerges with yearning for successes in the moment.
Parse, R. R. (1997). Joy-sorrow: A study using the Parse research method. <i>Nursing Science Quarterly</i> , 10(2), 80-87.	Joy-sorrow	Joy-sorrow is pleasure amid adversity emerging with the cherished contentment of benevolent engagements.
Parse, R. R. (2001). The lived experience of contentment. In R. R. Parse (Ed.), <i>Qualitative inquiry: The path of sciencing</i> . Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.	Contentment	Contentment is a satisfying calmness amid the arduous as resolute liberty arises with benevolent engagements
Bournes, D. A. & Mitchell, G. J. (2002). Waiting: The experience of persons in a critical care waiting room. <i>Research in Nursing and Health</i> , 25(1), 58-67.	Waiting	Waiting is a vigilant attentiveness surfacing amid an ambiguous turbulent lull as contentment emerges with uplifting engagements.
Baumann, S. L. (2003). The lived experience of feeling very tired: A study of adolescent girls. <i>Nursing Science Quarterly</i> , 16(4), 326-323.	Feeling very tired	Feeling tired is struggling with being attentively present as calming contentment emerges amid discomforting discordance.

Reference	Phenomenon	Structure of the Lived Experience
Jonas-Simpson, C. M. (2003). The experience of being listened to: A human becoming study with music. <i>Nursing Science Quarterly</i> , 16(3), 232-238.	Being listened to	Being listened to is an acknowledging engagement arising with the gratifying contentment of an unburdening respite.
Bunkers, S. S. (2004). The lived experience of feeling cared for: A human becoming perspective. <i>Nursing Science Quarterly</i> , 17(1), 63-71.	Feeling cared for	Feeling cared for is contentment with intimate affiliations arising with salutary endeavors, while honoring uniqueness amid diversity.
Bournes, D. A. & Ferguson-Pare, M. (2005). Persevering through a difficult time during the SARS outbreak in Toronto. <i>Nursing Science Quarterly</i> , 18(4), 324-333.	Persevering through a difficult time	Persevering through a difficult time is dispiriting trepidation arising with witnessing suffering. It is a smothering connectedness with sequestering protection as unsettling contentment emerges amid unburdening hope.
Smith, S. M. (2006). The lived experience of doing the right thing: A Parse method study. Dissertation Abstracts International, UMI No. AAI3212987) 145 p.	Doing the right thing	Doing the right thing is steadfast uprightness amid adversity, as honorableness with significant affiliations emerges with contentment.
Hayden, S. J. (2007). Laughing: A Parse research method study. Dissertation Abstracts International, UMI No. AAI3295453) 137 p.	Laughing	Laughing is invigorating unburdening amid adversity as delightful contentment arises with affable alliances.
Kagan, P. N. (2008). Feeling listened to: A lived experience of humanbecoming. <i>Nursing Science Quarterly</i> , 21(1), 59-67.	Feeling listened to	Feeling listened to is unreserved affirmation amid potential irreverence arising with the liberating contentment of benevolent affiliations.

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

RESEARCHER CURRICULAR VITA

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Amherst, MA

EDUCATION

Ongoing	University of Massachusetts-Amherst PhD Nursing Anticipate date of graduation: May 2009
May 2005	Master of Science in Nursing University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Nursing Education role prep
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PRACTICE

Educational Practice

- 2007 – Present University of Massachusetts-Amherst School of Nursing
Arnold House, 715 North Pleasant St
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Teaching Associate – Second Bachelor Program
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- 2003-2006 University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire College of Nursing
105 Garfield Ave
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715-836-5287
Clinical Instructor
FMHN 213 Instructor: lecture (Wellness: Body, Mind, Spirit)
FMHN 235 Instructor: lecture/lab (communication, clinical
decision making, and core concepts of nursing)
FMHN 260 Instructor: lab/lecture (health and physical
assessment)
FMHN 368 Instructor: clinical/lecture (Community: Pediatric
health promotion)
FMHN 438 Instructor: clinical/lecture (Children and families
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- 2004-2006 Drexel University
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Instructor
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Clinical Instructor
Medical Surgical Lab
- 2003-2005 University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire College of Nursing
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715-836-5287
Graduate Assistant
Skills Lab Assistant

Clinical Practice

- 1999-2006 Lions Eye Bank of Wisconsin, 2302 International Lane, Suite 200,
Madison, WI 53704-3157
877-233-2354
Enucleator
- 2002-2005 Luther Hospital, 1221 Whipple Street,
Eau Claire, WI 54703
715-838-6555
Staff nurse Surgery Center/GI Procedure
- 1999-2002 Sacred Heart Hospital, 900 West Clairemont Ave
Eau Claire, WI 54701
715-839-4121
Staff Nurse Ambulatory Care Unit (surgery center), Float Pool
- 1993-1995 Valley View Medical Center, 901 Reed Street,
Plymouth, WI 53073
920-893-1771
Prenatal Instructor
- 1993-1995 Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center, 2629 N. 7th Street,
Sheboygan, WI 53083
920-892-2165
Prenatal Instructor
- 1988-1993 St. Nicholas Hospital, 1601 N. Taylor Drive
Sheboygan, WI 53081
920-459-8300
Staff Nurse Float Pool/community education
- 1985-1988 Valley View Medical Center, 901 Reed Street
Plymouth, WI 53073
920-893-1771
Staff Nurse
- 1983-1985 Travel nurse agency
Staff Nurse
- 1981-1983 West Allis Memorial Hospital, 11716 W. Greenfield Ave.
West Allis, WI 53214
414-778-3864
Staff Nurse Float Pool

- 1979-1981 St. Francis Hospital, 3237 South 16th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53215
414-647-7678
Staff Nurse Medical
- 1977-1979 St. Lukes Hospital, 2900 W. Oklahoma Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53215
414-649-6000
Staff Nurse Float Pool
- 1976-1977 Madison General Hospital, 202 Park Street
Madison, WI 53715
608-267-6000
Staff Nurse Neonatal Intensive Care Unit/Nursery
- 1973-1976 St. Francis Hospital, 3237 South 16th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53215
414-647-7678
Staff Nurse Float Pool/Pediatrics

PUBLICATIONS

Refereed

Bonis, S. A. (2009). Knowing in Nursing: A Concept Analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(6), 1328–1341

Bonis, S. A. (2008). Evidence-Based Nursing and Evidence-Based Nursing Education. Under revision for *Nursing Education Perspectives*.

Bonis, S. A., Taft, L., & Wendler, M. C. (2007). Strategies to promote success on the NCLEX-RN: An evidence-based approach using the ACE Star Model of Knowledge Transformation. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 28(2), 82-87.

Non-refereed

Bonis, S. A. (2007). Evidence-based nursing education uses ACE Star Model. *Nursing Matters*, 18(2), 24-26.

Bonis, S. A. (2007). Strategies to promote success on the NCLEX-RN. *Nursing Matters* (2nd in a series)

Bonis, S. A. (2007). Student led journal club in a senior level pediatrics clinical. *Nursing Matters* (3rd in a series).

Bonis, S. A. (2007). Student involvement in development of pediatric clinical experiences. *Nursing Matters*, (4th in a series).

Bonis, S. A. (2007). Student designed scenarios to promote learning, understanding, and empathy in a beginning level nursing lab. *Nursing Matters*, (5th in a series).

Bonis, S. A. (2007). Reflective journaling and thematic group research to promote student wellness self-efficacy. *Nursing Matters* (6th in a series).

Pamphlet for senior nursing students, *Strategies for NCLEX Success: Recommendations from Students*

PRESENTATIONS

Peer Reviewed International

July 2005 Poster Presentation: *Strategies for Success on the NCLEX-RN*.
Fourth Annual Summer Institute on Evidence-Based Practice
University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.
Presenters: Susan Bonis, RN, BSN; Lois Taft, DNSc, RN, and M.
Cecilia Wendler, PhD, RN

Peer Reviewed National

March 2008 Paper Presentation: Knowing in Nursing: A Concept Analysis.
Eastern Nurses Research Conference. Philadelphia.

Peer Reviews State

May 2007 Poster Presentation: Strategies to Promote Retention and Success
of English as Second Language Nursing Students. Sigma Theta
Tau Beta Zeta Chapter at Large. Massachusetts.

April 2006 Paper Presentation: *Strategies to Promote Success on the NCLEX-
RN: An Evidence-Based Approach Using the ACE Star Model of
Knowledge Transformation*. Sigma Theta Tau Kaleidoscope.
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

October 2005 Presentation: *Strategies for Success on the NCLEX-RN*. 2005
Wisconsin Nurses Association Convention: Susan Bonis, RN,
MSN, Lois Taft, DNSc, RN, M. Cecilia Wendler, RN, PhD,
CCRN.

- August 2005 Poster Presentation: *Strategies to Promote Success on the NCLEX-RN: An Evidence-Based Approach Using the ACE Star Model of Knowledge Transformation*. SOTL Symposium: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: Susan Bonis, RN, MSN, Lois Taft, DNSc, RN, M. Cecilia Wendler, RN, PhD, CCRN.
- April 2005 Paper Presentation: *Strategies for Success on the NCLEX-RN*. Sigma Theta Tau Kaleidoscope. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: Susan Bonis, RN, BSN; Lois Taft, DNSc, RN, and M. Cecilia Wendler, PhD, RN.

HONORS, AWARDS, and GRANTS

Grants

- 2009 Dr. Lillian R. Goodman and Dr. Mary K. Alexander Fellowship
- 2006 - 2009 GAANN Fellowship University of Massachusetts-Amherst
- 2005-2006 Grant: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Network for Excellence in Teaching): Learner-Centered Teaching

Awards and Honors

- 2006 2006 Professor of the Year University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
- 2006 Commendation: Outstanding Teaching, Mentoring and Encouraging Nontraditional Students at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
- 2006 Commendation: Student Support Services Program at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
- 2005 Who's Who Among America's Teachers
- 2004-present Honor Society of Nursing Sigma Theta Tau International

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2008-present	Midwest Nursing Research Society (EB Nursing Education RIG)
2007-present	Eastern Nursing Research Society (Qualitative RIG; Theory RIG)
2008-present	International Consortium of Parse Scholars
2008-present	ICPS Research Group (Toronto Chapter)
2006-present	National League of Nursing
2006-present Zeta Chapter	Honor Society of Nursing Sigma Theta Tau International, Beta
2004-2006	Vice President: Honor Society of Nursing Sigma Theta Tau International, Delta Phi Chapter

PROFESSIONAL COMMITTEES

2004-2006	International Education and Global Studies University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire College of Nursing and Health Sciences
2003-2004	Executive Committee University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire School of Nursing Graduate student representative

PROFESSIONAL WORKSHOPS

June 2008	Institute of Humanbecoming Summer Program: Pittsburgh, PA.
February 2006	Collaboration Conference: Building a Learner Centered Classroom. Bloomington, MN.
January 2006	NET Scholar Faculty Winterim Institute: Learner Centered Teaching in Lecture. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Fall 2005	NET Scholar Book Talk: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Weimer, M. E. (2002). Learner-Centered Teaching. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
August 2005	NET Scholar Learner-Centered Teaching Workshop. Mary Ellen Weimer. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

- August 2005 NET Scholar Scholarship of Teaching-Learning Symposium.
Current Issues in the Scholarship of Teaching-Learning. Kathleen
McKinney. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.
- July 2005 Fourth Annual Summer Institute on Evidence-Based Practice.
University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

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