

Autobiographical Cultural Analysis and Reflection

I. Personal Cultural Makeup

In Chapter 5 of *Soul, Self and Society*¹, Rynkiewicz discusses and analyzes anthropological concepts including marriage, kinship, and descent. The author's main thesis is that marriage, kinship, and descent continue to function to structure relationships, form groups, and define society even in the face of urbanization and globalization. An example based on our own personal cultural makeup affirms the author's thesis and is described as follows. Looking at our own personal cultural makeup, we can understand the typical family group composition. With my parents, there is equal recognition to both sides (Polish-mom's side and Italian-Dad's side). On the other hand, with my mom's and dad's parents both are part of a patriarchal family group which emphasizes ties to the father. My father's mom and dad migrated from Bari, Italy to have a better life in America, find suitable work and raise a family. My mother's polish family migrated from Poland for the same reasons. My mom and dad had my brother and I resulting in producing a new nuclear family. After my brother and I got older, we left the household and my mom and dad remained in the household. Growing up, my Aunt Isabel lived with my family and helped to raise and take care of my brother and I.

II. Family Relations

I was born last and my brother was born first. He was the favored child in the household growing up, but I was the center of attention. Growing up in the Stallone family household, I was more adventurous, empathetic and sociable than my sibling. I also got along with different people of diverse backgrounds. My father's side had 13 brothers and sisters. I grew up in a

¹ Rynkiewicz, M. *Soul, Self and Society: A Postmodern Anthropology for Mission in a Postcolonial World*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011.

small rural town called East Longmeadow, MA. My dad was head of the household and went to work to support the family. He was a blue-collar worker. We were a middle-class family. My mom stayed home to take care of my brother and I. My aunts and uncles also helped to raise my brother and I.

Geographically, my mother's and father's family are located in Springfield, MA. I attended an all-white multi-generational Catholic church growing up in E. Longmeadow, MA. There was a history of my mom's and dad's side attending the Catholic Church. Growing up, I had a close relationship with my aunts and uncles from both sides of the family. We had Sunday meals after church with extended family from both sides. My aunts and uncles were instrumental in raising me.

With holidays including Thanksgiving and Christmas, I can remember spending time with my mom's and dad's families. We spent the Thanksgiving holiday with the Polish side and the Christmas holiday with the Italian side. We also had our traditions that were derived from the Italian and Polish cultures. With Christmas eve, we would have a polish meal and on Christmas day we would have an Italian meal along with the turkey and ham. For Easter, we would have a polish meal on Easter eve and a traditional ham meal on Easter day.

Also, I attended my cousins' birthdays and they attended my birthday. I was close to my cousins growing up. My brother and I were close growing up.

III. Social Hierarchy

In Chapter 9 of *Soul, Self and Society*¹, Rynkiewich discusses and analyzes anthropological concepts including caste, class and ethnicity. The author's main argument is that, "While anthropologists talk about egalitarian societies, the truth is that there is no society in which

everyone is equal”. To affirm the author’s argument, we offer the following example of my family’s social hierarchy.

My mom’s and dad’s family migrated from Poland and Italy to achieve a better way of life, better job and raise a family. Both sides were lower class. My nuclear family consisted of my father, mother and brother. My dad was head of the household and went to work to support the family. He was a blue-collar manufacturing worker and earned a middle-class income. On the other hand, my mom stayed home and took care of and raised my brother and I. She only worked part-time as a secretary when we were older. My aunts and uncles also helped out with taking care of us. We lived in a small cape house in East Longmeadow, MA which was near Springfield, MA.

We moved to Enfield, CT when I was a junior high school and I graduated from high school. I attended engineering school and graduated with a Bachelors degree in Chemical Engineering. I worked full-time in the chemical manufacturing industry as a professional chemical engineer. In 2004, I moved to Wellsboro and was saved and attended an Evangelical/Charismatic Church. I continued to work full-time as a professional chemical engineer. The town consisted of poor and rich and there was no middle class. After living in Wellsboro, PA until 2015, I moved to New Jersey and worked in a white collar engineering management role. The towns where I lived were upper class. I attended a C&MA church in New Jersey. The church was multi-generational and multi-cultural and was composed of upper class people. I am attending seminary at Nyack ATS in New York City.