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**Identity as Relational in Michelle Obama's *Becoming***

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Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled “Identity as Relational in Michelle Obama’s *Becoming*”  
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Bhatta has been approved by the undersigned member of the Research Committee:

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## Identity as Relational in Michelle Obama's *Becoming*

### Abstract

*This research paper examines the notion of identity as relational with reference to Michelle Obama's autobiographical memoir *Becoming*. The study investigates that identity of an individual is molded in association with the factors such as other individual, gender norms, topography, societal mores, culture values, etc. rather than in isolation. Taking theoretical concept of relational self as proposed by Jean Baker Miller, this research projects how Michelle Obama's memoir articulates her identity not as absolute and monolithic phenomena but as a dynamic, relational spectacle. Obama's identity as a black woman, the First Lady, an American individual, a mother of the children as expressed in the memoir sheds light on the fact that her selfhood contours on society, geography, politics, culture, and other social attributes together with personal traits. These factors, however, are interrelated and interdependent and constitute human identity.*

Key Words: Identity, Relationality, Memoir, Entanglement, Ideology, Topography

This research paper examines Michelle Obama's autobiographical memoir *Becoming* and explores the notion of identity as relational. The memoir deals with the struggle of an African American girl from working class for her space in American society where black women are taken as submissive, passive, nurturing and defined in relation to white American women. Obama establishes her identity as the First Lady in relation to particular society, geography, temporality, politics, and different psychological aspects. Her identity has been changed when she moves from Chicago to White House. Being a woman from the black community, she encounters with the people from diverse culture. However, Obama explores her upbringing in Chicago, her career, her relationship with Barack Obama and finally her years living in the White House as First Lady. Thus, this research probes into how Michelle Obama's identity is formed and reformed when she shifts from one place to another place, one social engagement to another engagement.

The research revolves around the principle of relational identity with respect to Obama's *Memoir*. It contends human identity is always in process-constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. Human identity is always in the process of formation so it is not absolute and fix. Therefore, human identity is also fluid which is formed in relational way. Generally, identity is shaped by cultural location, social convention, geography, temporality, and different psychological aspects. An individual cannot be separated from society, as it provides meaning to his or her existence. Identity is associated with the sense of belongingness. Identity in general is an answer to the question 'Who am I?' In present time, identity has become a serious issue because of post modernism. Identity is one of the prominent human traits and has become a

mandatory part of the experience of everyday lives.

*Becoming* incorporates Obama's struggles, hardships, challenges and complex circumstances that eventually transforms her as an agent of peace, justice and empowerment. It reflects her contribution and devotion in her mission to empower the women and children from the backward community whose lives are characterized by deprivation, scarcity, illiteracy, poor infrastructure and lack of basic requirements for living. In her memoir, Obama as a major character forms multiple identity. By birth, she represents as typical African girl who gets born in a small traditional African society. According to her culture, she gets a name Michelle Robinson. She married to Barak Obama. When she married to Barak her identity formed as Michelle Obama. Later on, she moves from Chicago to Washington, where she finds a completely new situation. She changes her psychological thinking. And she is recognized by a new name called First Lady. In this way she adjusts in such multi-dimensional world. Likewise, it further explores how Michelle Obama's multiple identities contradict the conventional notion of singular identity which dissolved owing to the globalized nature of the world intensified by the physical means such as transportation and the virtual means such as internet through which people have multiple identities in different places at the same time.

Personal identity is shaped according to various identifying units such as geographical, cultural, ethnic, racial, psychological, social, sexual, linguistic, and political and many more. When we belong to particular geographical background, we do have specific language and culture. So, our origin shapes our subjectivity. As human subjectivity is constructed in relation to other subjectivities, culture can be the chief factor among those subjectivities. There are two-way relationships between culture and human beings. It means they are interrelated to each other. The identity of

Michelle Obama is primarily constructed on the basis of her interconnectedness with different social phenomena. Obama spends her life with regular interaction with society. So, there are two-way relationships between society and an individual. The modern world reflects multi-dimensional scenario where human being experiences more than a single identity. Obama also influenced by such multiple aspects and her identity also shaped accordingly. Therefore, the present study focuses on the relational identities and the role of an individual within them in various contexts with relation to others. Obama's construction of identity in multicultural land reflects Obama's own experience and struggle when moving from Chicago to White House. Apart from this, human beings have relationship with several other factors (Social, political, economic etc.) which shows that human identity is always relational.

Michelle Obama recounts her time growing up on the South Side of Chicago as she shares the beautiful memories of her childhood as well as some of the important things. She was an extra ordinary child, driven to do well in school. Her story begins "I spent much of my childhood listening to the sound of striving" (1). She speaks lovingly of her roots in this working-class family, her parents and her brother and grandparents and how their values shaped the adult she would become. We witness the grief she experienced over the loss of her father and her continuing admiration and love for her mother who was tenacious in seeking a good education for her children. In this memoir, she is so open and honest and it feels so intimate. She speaks about the discrimination against the men in her family, about being black at Princeton, raises the issues related with black identity and women empowerment.

Different critics and reviewer have their interpretation regarding *Becoming*. Some of them are concerned with her struggle as race woman while other talk about feminist ethos. Some of them also declare that political issues can be seen. Candace

Howze in *Women of Color Magazine* claims:

*Becoming* is a story that focuses more on hard work and sacrifice than privilege; it grapples with the nuances of understanding identity, and it overflows with an emotional call to perseverance. The memoir is written like the words of a trusted girlfriend and less like sound bites of a public figure handing down golden nuggets of advice. (42-44)

Howze has focused Obama's hard work and sacrifice in order to establish her distinct identity. As a career woman, this memoir is relatable because of its vulnerability. So, Obama does not only talk about her personal struggle rather incorporates the entire women from black community. Despite the racial discrimination, she starts an initiative for children. Which helps spark her children's health initiative, called *Let's Move!* She gets large chain companies to promise to cut the salt, fat, and sugar in the meals they market to children, works with schools to provide healthier lunches, and gets networks like Disney and NBC to run PSAs during kids' programs about the importance of physical activity. Michelle accomplishes a lot of her goals with *Let's Move!* And also works on other initiatives like Joining Forces (which focuses on supporting military families), Reach Higher (which helps kids get to and stay in college) and Let Girls Learn (which supports girls' education worldwide). Ashika Prajnya Paramitain *Humaniora* Journal states:

Obama also experienced, now more than ever, the lies of the post-feminist myth. If she was "Other" in Princeton and Harvard because of her skin, now she is "Other" in her own relationship because she was a woman as this is what the role of the first lady traditionally entails. Obama shares how she worked on establishing her identity through her initiatives. Focusing on what she held dear in her heart, she begin developing initiatives that dealt with the



welfare of military families, as well as and the health and education for children, especially young girls and the underprivileged. (104-05)

In her analysis Obama managed to spread her message across the country and reach people across a wide age range using a platform she loved popular culture. This was the aspect that distinguished her from the other first ladies. There was always a refreshing air about her that was able to attract and captivate her audience. And again, she succeeded. She finishes her service as first lady with grace and as her own person.

Dipti Tamang in *E- International Relation* writes that the memoir sheds an important light on the realities of women in American and international politics. Tamang writes “Since stepping reluctantly into public life, I’ve been held up as the most powerful woman in the world and taken down as an “angry black woman.” I’ve wanted to ask my detractors which part of that phrase matters to them the most- is it “angry” or “black” or “woman?” (2) Obama’s *Becoming* is a reflection of her personal journey, which is precisely why it is a politically relevant book. It provides a firsthand account of a woman of stature in US-American politics experiencing gender and race in her individual journey and later as the First Lady. In the first segment of the book, Obama provides an account of her personal struggles as an ambitious girl from the black community growing up in the Southside of Chicago. Reading into these narratives of her days as a teenager outlines the manner in which identities are not insular, compartmentalized categories. Unlike generalizations of black communities as a homogenous racial group, she brings forth the internal divisions among these communities along lines of class and spatiality, which radically alters the notion of the domination of black communities.

In order to establish her identity as strong mother Michelle found a way to balance her work and motherhood. Michelle was both a working professional and a

mother to Malia and Sasha. She also states that her friends Susan Sher and Valeria Jarrett were working mothers that prioritized their children above work. The author states that while assuming the role of the First lady, she ensured that she set aside some time to spend time with her daughters. The book strives to show that a woman can learn to balance the demands of their work and motherhood. Her efforts to push forward in her career and also be a caring, present as mother. Such kind of nature helped to win the hearts of Americans everywhere. Later, she details her concerns for the safety of her children as they become recognized faces nationwide.

*New Yorker* critic Emily Lordi comments: *Becoming*, as Motherhood memoir where, Obama exposes the pressures and thrills of black women's self-creation while she details the rather more modest creation of a stable domestic life (3). In this respect, the issue of family is widely discussed in this book. Obama states that regardless of the chaos going on in the south side of Chicago, Michelle was always protected under the umbrella of her family. She describes the value of family in times of need. For instance, she states that when her grandfather Southside separated from her grandmother, his daughter Carolyn took him in. Subsequently, Michelle's mother acceptance to stay at the White House as well as helping Michelle to accompany both Malia and Sasha to school is a clear indication of the significant value of family. Michelle Obama's story is also an example of the American Dream and leaves a powerful message to all girls from African working-class communities. Eunice Barron writes:

*Becoming* is the autobiography that the American people need and must read about. Michelle Obama's story is the living example of the American Dream and leaves a powerful message of how an African American girl from a working-class background had the privilege to attend Ivy League institutions

and unexpectedly becoming the First Lady of the United States. What made Obama's autobiography interesting was that she told her own story in her own words which gave the reader a more intimate perspective on what she went through and how her early and personal life was like. (1)

Barron has focused upon American dream where she is a symbol of what is good about America. She reminds us that an African American girl from the poorer town has the potential to do and be anything. And not to simply become First Lady, which was a role forced upon her. By determination and hard work, she got to Harvard and Princeton and carved out a highly successful career in her own right. Likewise, Obama spreads a message that the hard work and a good education, even makes president of the United States. This is the American Dream.

In the process of explanations and finding out different issue in *Becoming* other critics Gloria. Y. A. Ayee Et Al explore:

From the beginning of her tenure as first lady, Michelle Obama was fully aware that many Americans had not been exposed to the meaning and themes of motherhood in black culture, although they would likely be quite familiar with the long-standing stereotypes and misrepresentations of black women and mothers in society promulgated in public discourse. Consciously or subconsciously, in her role as first lady, Obama made the institution of black motherhood more transparent to those living in the United States and around the world. In doing so, she defied the long-standing dominant and oppressive stereotypes of black women and mothers while simultaneously redefining black motherhood and black families on the nation's most public stage. (460-483)

These lines help to elucidate Obama's identity as a black woman, her performance of

maternity, and the advocacy work that became her platform during her tenure as first lady. Some of Obama's most popular policy reveals that her persona and mothering style defied and challenged long-standing stereotypes of black women and mothers. In a further examination of her policy initiatives, we argue that public perceptions of Obama's role as the "mother of the nation" were connected to the policies she chose to advance.

A number of recent African American memoir writers and literary critics are concerned with parental influences. In writing about Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, G. Thomas Couser explains what he calls "patriography," or children writing about their fathers, "is inherently relational and intersubjective life writing; it grows out of and attempts to represent an intimate human relationship. It is also, of course, intergenerational: it attempts to negotiate or understand a family legacy as passed on from father to son, an act I call filiation" (260). Such a form of memoir attempts to interpret family legacies or inheritances, and Couser's study claims Obama's memoir to be a part of this subgenre. In *Becoming*, Michelle Obama writes, "Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own" (xi). Claiming ownership of these stories allows black writers to have a tangible inheritance for not only their children, but also for their reader.

Different critics and reviewers have their different perspective to analyze the memoir and many reviewers talked about racial discrimination, her role as mother and political issues. Although different critic have analyzed from different perspective, no one has gone through the perspective of relational identity. So, this research explores Obama's relational identity.

Jean Baker Miller propounded the feminist reevaluation with her thesis that "women have developed the foundations of extremely valuable psychological qualities" (26), but that gender inequality causes these qualities or strengths to go unrecognized or devalued. Among the strengths that Miller identified was "women's great desire for affiliation" (88-89). Although this female predilection has been a source of women's problems, it can also be, she argued, the basis for important social values. Indeed, Miller concluded her influential book with the hope that it is precisely the affiliative qualities that women have developed traits that are "dysfunctional for success in the world as it is" that may be those which are most needed for transforming the world into a more humane place (124). In the same way, Michelle was both a working professional and a mother to Malia and Sasha. She also states that her friends Susan Sher and Valeria Jarrett were working mothers that prioritized their children above work. Obama states that while assuming the role of the First lady, she ensured that she set aside some time to spend time with her daughters. The book strives to show that a woman can learn to balance the demands of their work and motherhood.

Nancy Chodorow extended Miller's work by proposing that a female relational self emerges from a structure of parenting in which mothers treat their sons and daughters differently. Daughters, who are treated as projections of the mother, never fully separate from her and thus come to define themselves as connected to or continuous with others. Boys, who are treated as more separate by their mothers, come to identify themselves as differentiated from others and possess more rigid ego boundaries than their sisters. Thus, "the basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world; the basic masculine sense of self is separate" (169). The credit for

developing the political implications of the relational self goes to the French feminist Luce Irigaray. In this regard Mellor further says:

To develop the political implications of this relational self, one might invoke the French feminist Luce Irigaray's concept of a 'placental economy', grounded on the image of the pregnant woman who experiences herself always as two-in-one. A relational self does not make economic or political decisions based on the assessment of self-interest (what contemporary economists call 'rational choice'), but rather on what Irigaray calls a practice of gift giving, of submerging one's personal desires into a desire for the good of one's family or the whole community. (186)

Human existence is interconnected with other societal attributes so it is always relational. Human beings have relationships with several other factors. They have relationship with other social phenomena, and non physical world. Human identity depends on the role and position of several other attributes because human existence without other aspect cannot be imagined. Michelle Obama also encounters all sorts of extraordinary and accomplished people in the world leaders, inventors, musicians, astronauts, athletes, professors, entrepreneurs, artists and writers, pioneering doctors and researchers. Some of them are women, and some are black or of color.

According to Jean Baker Miller, the infant, through the interaction with the caretaker, "begins to develop an internal representation of her/himself as a 'being-in-relationship.' This is the beginning of a sense of 'self' which reflects what is happening between people picking up the feelings of the other person. The child experiences a sense of comfort only as the other is also comfortable"(4). Human growth is a process of engaging in "progressively complex relationships" rather than in separating from caretakers by pursuing goals of autonomy and power. Maturity is defined in

terms of "relational competence" "empathy" "clarity in connection" and the ability to create and sustain mutual intersubjectivity. This, then, is their maturational ideal: the true relational self, who reflects the earliest human interpersonal experience, realizing its "motive for connection" in mutually empathetic relationships. Relationship is, thus, both the context in which the self develops and the goal for which it strives. Obama also details the joys of womanhood as well as its difficulties, a previously unseen glance into the interiority of the Obama family. With a refreshing vulnerability, she discusses the physical and emotional strain of her miscarriage and IVF treatments. Her efforts to push forward in her career and also be a caring, present mother is a familiar story, her reliability and candor helped her win the hearts of Americans everywhere. Later, she details her concerns for the safety of her children as they become recognized faces nationwide.

Like Miller, Chodorow was critical of the social systems that reflect the male psyche, in particular the alienated work world of capitalist societies. But unlike Miller, Chodorow's solution emphasized gender balance rather than a release of women's strengths upon a resisting world. In calling for men to participate equally in parenting, she advocated a realignment that would have "people of both genders with the positive capacities each has, but without the destructive extremes these currently tend toward" (218). Assuming the public sphere changes for women initiated by the women's movement, Chodorow suggested that it is up to men to complete the rectification of the gender imbalance by engaging in the affiliative, nurturing activities of the private, domestic sphere (218). Thus, like Miller's, Chodorow's solution was one that called for a universal valuing of those relational qualities traditionally identified with women.

The relational identity constructs a conceptual tool for integrating the individual (person-based), interpersonal, and collective (role-based) levels of self. As such, relational identity may help answer calls for integrative constructs that can bridge multiple levels and, thus, more richly and holistically describe one's work experience within the organization.

Likewise, Julia Kristeva suggests that the self is not fixed, rather a subject always in process. The language of the symbolic provides the scope to continue social communication and a complete subversion or rejection of it may delink the connection between the self and the society, and the subject will fail to convey his/her self to the society. Therefore, a workable adjustment is needed to establish a dialogue to continue with the conversation between the self and the society. The intertextual exchange of "various signifying systems" does not allow any singularity as it is always in process, and the idea of subjectivity it provides should always be "plural, shattered, and capable of being tabulated" (111).

Regarding, the concept of identity, Stuart Hall claims that identity is not complete version but, it keeps on changing. It is produced by socio-cultural values. The modern multicultural world influences human fixed identity. In this regard, he claims:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished facts, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (222)

Different cultural characteristics play vital role in shaping the identity of human beings. Identity can be shaped through the social norms and values which they belong



to. If the people cannot relate themselves in one particular cultural assumption, they have to suffer from cultural difficulties which result in loss of identity. This situation transforms them as completely isolated and alienated. The people, who migrated from one location to another location, mostly suffer from identity crisis because cultural atmosphere does not remain the same everywhere. In this way, they have suffering, frustration, alienation, identity crisis and anxiety, in new location, these all factors welcome crisis of the self. During Obama's initial days in Princeton, she also feels the similar situation which is made up mostly of white, male students. Later she adopts herself with that environment.

Hall argues, identity is "a 'production' which is never complete, always in process" (392). It means Human identity is on process of formation in relation with different phenomena. So, human identity is always unstable and dynamic. It does not have perfect stage rather conditional. Here, Hall further says: The inner exploration of cultural identity cripples and deforms...They produce without horizon, colorless, stateless, and rootless- a race of angles. Nevertheless, this idea of otherness as an inner compulsion changes our conception of cultural identity. (113). Hall after all, comes to conclude the fact that cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying changed outside history and culture. Culture is defining factor of human being which shapes and reshapes human identity. Michelle Obama also establishes herself as a symbol for African American women and her presence in the White House inspired African American women to view their group identity more positively.

Robert Hollinger summarizes those who avoid subscribing to a defined view of self and identity:

For Derrida and Foucault, the idea of a unified self, even if self-constructed, misses the point that identity is a function of difference. Lacan offers, in

opposition to Weber and Freud, a self without unity. Foucault, Lyotard, and Derrida agree with Lacan's movement away from a unified self. Echoing themes from Nietzsche, via Nehemas, and from Freud via Rorty, who ascribes the Nietzschean multiple view of self to Freud, they define the self as multiple, not fixed, and always under construction with no overall blueprint. The various multiplicities that constitute the self at a given time are involved in play and dance with each other. (113)

The postmodernist critique of self, identity, and agency was summarized by Hollinger in *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*. Hollinger provides brief, thematic discussions of the various positions that have contributed to the postmodern challenge to the contemporary social sciences and their writings about self and identity.

Hollinger identifies a sentiment that the self should not be unified in modernity.

Hollinger cites various postmodernists who avoid subscribing to a defined view of self and identity, such as Derrida and Foucault, who believe that identity is a function of difference, and Lacan, Nietzsche, and Rorty who deny that there is a unified self.

The relational self is achieved by assimilating with significant others (i.e., the relational self contains those aspects of the self-concept that are shared with relationship partners and define the person's role or position within significant relationships). The relational self is based on personalized bonds of attachment. Such bonds include parent-child relationships, friendships, and romantic relationships as well as specific role relationships such as teacher-student or clinician-client. This form of self-representation relies on the process of reflected appraisal and is associated with the motive of protecting or enhancing the significant other and maintaining the relationship itself. (83-93)

In Obama's autobiography, we see her identity is fluxing according to pace and space. Sometimes, she is lawyer, sometime Social worker, motivator, rock star; sometimes she performs the role of Mother and as the role of First lady of united State. Position is also shifting from place to place and time to time. Here, such identity refers the relational identity. The autobiographical theorists Sidone smith and Julia Watson state, how identity is in a flux in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for interpreting life narrative*. They write "Identities, or subject positioning, materialize within collectivities and out of the culturally marked differences that permeate symbolic interaction within and between collectivities" (32-33). When we apply these ideas in Obama's autobiography, we know that Michelle is not only a single entity or person but she is related to many at the same time. She is female in the sense of gender, she is black in the sense of community, she is an African American in the sense of nationality, and she is the First Lady in the sense of her world view. Here, this process of identity formation refers the relationality or relational identity. Which never comes in vacant rather it comes from the other. So, Obama's personal narratives have also shown the same thing. It carries the public history in large portion.

Besides culture, human existence is related to other factors as well. Some people relate human identity with economy. According to them, human identity can never be separated from economy. Human being is an agent of economy and they cannot exist without its influence. Apart from this, human beings have relationship with several other factors (Social, lingual, political etc.) which shows that human identity is always relational. Defining relational self, Anne K. Mellor remarks, "subjectivity constructed in relation to other subjectivities, hence a self that is fluid, absorptive, and responsive, with permeable ego boundaries. This self typically located its identity with in a larger human nexus, a family or social community" (192). As

human subjectivity is constructed in relation to other subjectivities, economy can be the chief factor among those subjectivities. There is a two way relationship between economy and human beings. It means they are interrelated to each other. Michelle Obama belongs to a normal family in Chicago. By birth she faced economic crisis. The major aspect behind her success is her dedication and hard work. She continuously worked for all of the people that helped her to get distinct identity where she is now:

I'd been lucky to have parents, teachers, and mentors who'd fed me with consistent, simple message: *You matter*. As an adult, I wanted to pass those words to a new generation. It was the message I gave my own daughters, who were fortunate to have it reinforced daily by their school and their privileged circumstances, and I was determined to express some version of it to every young person I encountered. I wanted to be the opposite of the guidance counselor I'd had in high school, who'd blithely told me I wasn't Princeton material. (383)

Especially while talking about her extended family, she describes about how racial discrimination can have dominant effects on people of color and that particular areas in which they belong to. They have not given any opportunities in comparison to white from generations to generations. This is the fact that there is still discrimination in the communities.

Relational psychoanalytic theory has incorporated some assumptions that were grounding premises for feminist theory and epistemology. Relational self has become a strong focus of feminist research. "Difference feminism"- or cultural feminism- advocates the virtues of the difference between men and women and values the strengths commonly associated with women: relationship, care, nurturance, and

emotions. Difference feminists understand patriarchal oppression as diminishing and devaluing the values associated with women's identity and attack models that presuppose the self as being free, rational, genderless, ageless and classless.

Relational theorists underscore the significance of relationships for women's selves.

Jean Miller portrays the development of an "interacting sense of self" in girls. A woman sense of self "becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliation in relationships" (83).

Michelle Obama also gives us lots of psychological themes in *Becoming*: the attraction of opposites; the importance of family history; the workings of what seemed to be a permanent long-distance marriage. The first time the family could reasonably count on having dinner together every night of the week was, ironically, in the White House. She writes movingly about the invaluable support of her mother Marian as well as of meetings with famous strangers that were brief but significant: an eclectic group that includes Queen Elizabeth and Lin-Manuel Miranda.

Autobiography is self-reflective in which autobiographer's beliefs, ideologies come into play. It cannot be objective writing about the self. There is relation between subject and narration. In this regard Freud thinks the relation between narrative and the subject this important consequence for the understanding of autobiography subjectivity, representation, narrative and how we remember our lives (52). In short we find logical relation between Michelle Obama's narration and her memories. Her autobiography is based on her memories. Memories are bridges which join past and present. Michelle Obama's past life was full of challenging where her life was full of struggle.

Personal identity is one of the dominant themes in autobiographies because it represents the struggle of trying to become oneself and connect with others. The idea

is accurately portrayed in the autobiography of Michelle Obama. In her autobiography, former First Lady tells the advantages and disadvantages of such an important position. However, we find the story of a girl and the woman she wanted to become. Along this identity process, the relevance of her relationships with the others is essential. In this line of thought, *Becoming* is a compendium of honest and authentic experiences with unknown and well-known people who influence decisively in her maturity and place in life. Her autobiography can be considered an attempt to give voice to a black girl with an ordinary life who becomes First Lady of the United States.

In high school, Michelle Obama said she felt like she was representing her neighborhood. At Princeton, faced with questions of whether she was the product of Affirmative Action programs, she felt like she was representing her race:

At school, when anyone asked where I was from, I answered, “Chicago.” And to make clear that I wasn’t one of the kids who came from well-heeled northern suburbs like Evanston or Winnetka and staked some false claim on Chicago, I would add, with a touch of pride or maybe defiance, “the South Side.” I knew that if those words conjured anything at all, it was probably stereotyped images of a black ghetto, given that gang battles and violence in housing projects were what most often showed up in the news. But again, I was trying, if only half consciously, to represent the alternative. I belonged at Princeton, as much as anybody. And I came from the South Side of Chicago. It felt important to say out loud. (85)

In this extract, the author exposes how racial prejudice limited the destinies of most African American generations. As a result of poor living condition, most parents were unemployed and thus could not afford to send their children to good schools. Even for

students who were able to attend white-dominated universities like Princeton. Black students always felt intimidated and lacked a sense of belonging. Their presence was so conspicuous that they often stood out among their classmates. So, the author wants to show how the stereotype was dominant.

In the same way, when we look Michelle Obama's autobiography through the lens of Linda Anderson's idea she claims that "the text of the oppressed", articulating through one person's experience, experiences which may be representative of a particular marginalized group, is an important one: autobiography becomes both a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition (104). These lines show how a person experience articulated the rest one. In the same way Michelle's autobiography is an experience of Obama herself but that is related is other marginalized group who were suffering from many ways like poverty, racial discrimination, and lack of education. That is found in Obama's autobiography in the line:

You had only to look around at their faces in the room to know that despite their strengths these girls would need to work hard to be seen...They'd need to fight the invisibility that comes with being poor, female, and of color. They'd have to work to find their voices and not be diminished, to keep themselves from getting beaten down. They would have to work just to learn. But their faces were hopeful, and now so was I. For me it was a strange, quiet revelation: They were me, as I'd once been...Are you good enough? Yes, you are, all of you. (319-320)

In her role as First Lady, she establishes her identity as social worker. In this way, she was a defendant of education as the key for success. Therefore, she visited schools and paid special attention to girls' education. She wanted to help these girls to find

their own voices, to work in favour of non-discrimination and respect. She pursued the goal of supporting those girls in the hard path of being themselves. She felt identified with them and she knew she could give her example to transform the “no” into “Let’s go”. She was sure she had doubts but they had to be strong and brave enough to raise her voice. This is, probably, one of the most exciting connections, with girls like her, black and female.

Michelle Obama has great contribution in presidential campaign and supports her husband as they fight for the Democratic presidential nomination; follow by an arduous challenge from Republican presidential nominee Arizona Senator John McCain. Considering America’s long history of racial, political and economic inequality, the Obama election was not only historic but also represented hope, a pillar of the Obama campaign. Considering that over fifty years before African Americans experienced enormous levels of violence, hostility and destruction in our struggle for equality, Obama’s position of power represented progress. As many celebrated, regardless of race, class, gender and sexuality, Michelle Obama’s first lady status caused indignation from those who wanted to maintain White supremacist hegemonic norms and could not accept an African American First Lady representing the USA on a world stage. During election campaign Michelle devoted herself in mission:

When it came to campaigning, each day was another race to be run. I was still trying to cling to some form of normalcy and stability, not just for the girls, but for me. I carried two BlackBerrys—one for work, the other for my personal life and political obligations, which were now, for better or worse, deeply entwined. My daily phone calls with Barack tended to be short and newsy *Where are you? How’s it going? How are the kids?*—both of us



accustomed now to not speaking of fatigue or our personal needs. There was no point, because we couldn't attend to them anyway. Life was all about the ticking clock. (240)

The given extract describes the role of First Lady where Michelle Obama gradually expanded and broadened her role by engaging in social, political and economic activities which directly and indirectly impacted the lives of the American people. Michelle asserts that her political role as the first Lady made people interpret her every move from the way she dressed to well as her public messages. At times, she could be referred to as an angry black woman who had to prove her worth as a First Lady. The theme of the nasty side of politics continues when Donald Trump leveled political and personal accusations at Barack. She recalls that a few days later a stranger “started firing a semiautomatic rifle outside the window, aimed at the top floors of the White House” (29). The author puts emphasis on this theme by stating that her experience of politics was “the ugly red-versus-blue dynamic” (264) whose ‘nastiness’ had affected her personally.

In order to establish herself as social worker, Michelle worked on initiatives called Let's Move! (a children's health initiative), Joining Forces (which focuses on supporting military families), and Let Girls Learn (supporting girls' education worldwide), and a new White House garden. Throughout her personal story Obama represents the voice of the public by incorporating the realities of the common people. Obama believes in the power of writing as a multicultural literary strategy to give voice to others. In her own words:

In sharing my story, I hope to help create space for other stories and other voices, to widen the pathway for who belongs and why. I've been lucky enough to get to walk into stone castles, urban classrooms, and Iowa kitchens,

just trying to be myself, just trying to connect. For every door that's been opened to me, I've tried to open my door to others. And here is what I have to say, finally: Let's invite one another in. Maybe then we can begin to fear less, to make fewer wrong assumptions, to let go of the biases and stereotypes that unnecessarily divide us. Maybe we can better embrace the ways we are the same. It's not about being perfect. It's not about where you get yourself in the end. There's power in allowing yourself to be known and heard, in owning your unique story, in using your authentic voice. And there's grace in being willing to know and hear others. This, for me, is how we become. (421)

This is the message she wants to send: an invitation to connect with the others, to try to understand their own realities and their own problems. This is what she calls *Becoming*, knowing herself in a better way and analyzes how the connection with others contributes to her own existence. Nowadays, Michelle Robinson, more known as Michelle Obama, is a powerful public figure who defends the rights of girls and the visibility and empowerment of the female gender. However, she was born and raised in a middle-class apartment in the South Side of Chicago. That was the moment her particular *Becoming* started.

Michelle defines her multiple identities as a working mum and expresses the difficulties to find an adequate balance. This fact is reflected from her times in law firms and Health Service until her last days in the White House. Although she was a very good lawyer and she had a good job, she feels she needed something more, something where she could help the others, something where she could connect even more:

I was interested in possibly working for a foundation or a non-profit. I was interested in helping unprivileged kids. I wondered if I could find a job that

engaged my mind and still left me enough me to do volunteer work, or appreciate art, or have children. I wanted a life, basically. I wanted to feel whole. I made a list of issues that interested me: education, teen pregnancy, black self-esteem. (133)

Apart from job matters, she also starts to think critically about a marriage with Barack and like an ordinary working woman who wants to promote professionally and personally, many questions arise in her head: “I do recognize the value of individuals having their own interests, ambitions, and dreams...But I don’t believe that the pursuit of one person’s dreams should come at the expense of the couple” (140). At that point, she reflects about the situation and how she should face the marriage and her future as a working and professional woman, without being the wife of Barack. A year before the wedding, she loses one of her most powerful connections, her father: “I felt certain that I had something more to offer the world. It was time to make a move.” (146) Readers can observe here how important the connections are in life since they provoke deep changes in our mindset.

Obama also had performed a variety of public and private roles, from presidential escort, hostess, and social advocate to policy maker and presidential advisor. The nature of the position has always been both traditional and gendered, greatly influencing each First Lady’s performance. Due to the changing role of women in society, the notion of the First Lady being involved in public policy is a phenomenon isolated to the latter part of the twentieth century.

Moreover, Obama's autobiography deals with the stern childhood, struggling youth and the quest of the self. The autobiography *Becoming* is divided in three sections. The first part, “Becoming Me”, tells the endearing stories of Obama’s childhood and adolescence—how she grew and learned from her parents what it

meant to be strong and compassionate while negotiating her identity as an African-American girl. In “Becoming Us”, Obama opens up about her relationship with Barack, her husband, and her two children. The third part, “Becoming More”, deals with Obama’s negotiating another role, in addition to those she had already had, that is the First Lady of the United States. She witnessed, in close up, the falseness that is the post-racial narrative. Being more privy to the issues of the country than most, Obama witnessed the disastrous impacts of discrimination against black people in a wider and more severe level. Obama shares parts of her journey that made her who she is today—how she became.

Obama writes with clarity of her past and present, discussing her role as First Lady and its implications. She redefined the role by focusing her attention on alleviating poverty, improving education and emphasizing habits of healthy living. She analyzes the evolution of her character in the face of adversity, writing of demoralizing racial comments and instances of hatred that accompany being married to the first black President of the United States. She writes of the intense pressure to represent her husband and family and watch every little thing she says, does and wears.

Likewise, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue that: Analysts of agency have found the theorist Louis Althusser argued that “subject is a subject of ideology-not in the narrow sense of propaganda but in the broad sense of the pervasive cultural formations of the dominant class [...] the power of coercive state institutions to conform subjects to particular behaviors, beliefs, and identities –such as the military and the police (42). Here, these lines are talking about, how subject of ideology is transfer place to place, person to person, that is through propaganda. In Obama's autobiography, her ideology of ‘struggle’, and ‘dedication’ are escalate among the

mass through autobiography. The very words are frequently seen in her autobiography and maximum of people use in their life. If we see these, words from lens of agency. It opines her personal narrative is a public history.

Similarly, Obama notes that she is deeply uncomfortable with politics. Yet she is a political force. She took on issues that were important to her—often related to her role as “mom-in-chief”—by focusing on the needs of children, particularly girls. Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! Campaign targeted childhood obesity, while the Reach Higher Initiative and Let Girls Learn programs largely impacted needy families and minorities. She invited a 15-year-old girl who was shot in Chicago to perform at Barack Obama’s second inauguration, which was largely seen as a political acknowledgment of the devastation that gun violence causes to America’s youth. These initiatives recognize the enduring role of race, class, and gender in American society, yet Michelle Obama and the White House did not publicly celebrate these programs as a way to tackle racism, sexism, or classism. These “isms” are things that Michelle Obama has confronted throughout her life as well as in the White House, but they do not define her. Michelle Obama’s legacy may be her graceful and tactful manner in addressing the manifestations of America’s undying prejudices.

Again, Anderson talks about the how an autobiography carries the construct history of self-hood, which he/she learned by the subject he/she knows. “The texts which have helped to form the dominant tradition of autobiographical writing and the way they have both drawn on and helped to construct a history of selfhood, a paradigmatic narrative through which the subject has learned to know who s/he is” (31). In the same way Obama’s narration is also the talks about her self-hood what she had known and then persuade to us. Where she claims:

By the time I was fourteen, I basically thought of myself as half a grown-up

anyway—maybe even as two-thirds of a grown-up. I'd gotten my period, which I announced immediately and with huge excitement to everyone in the house, because that was just the kind of household we had. I'd graduated from a training bra to one that looked vaguely more womanly, which also thrilled me. Instead of coming home for lunch, I now ate with my classmates in Mr. Bennett's room at school. Instead of dropping in at Southside's house on Saturdays to listen to his jazz records and play with Rex, I rode my bike right past, headed east to the bungalow on Oglesby Avenue where the Gore sisters lived. (48)

Here, Michelle Obama wants to pursue the reader to read an autobiography.

Throughout her story, Michelle Obama appears to encourage parents to let their kids know what they [parents] can and cannot condone, as well as to have open communication with their kids. Without a doubt, open communication encourages children to open up, thereby providing a parent a chance to guide their child in the right direction. The author's nurturing family helped her become the person she is today. Therefore, Michelle Obama seems to uphold that supporting children, instilling moral values, and bringing them up in a nurturing family helps in guiding their upward journey.

*Becoming* incorporates the idea of relational identity as Obama's memoir focuses not only on events from her lifetime, but also on the historical events that shaped her relatives' lives and the lives of other African Americans over the time. Obama shows her relationship with Barak Obama and her role as First Lady of America. The book talks about her roots and how she found her voice, as well as her time in the White House, her public health campaign, and her role as a mother. The entire above incident which was inscribed by Obama in her life narratives carries her

personal history in relation to the public history at the same time. Her, Experience, Memory, Embodiment, Identity and through the Agency, she made her subject of self-hood. Her self-hood is not only Michelle Obama's self-hood, but that is linked with large portion of the African American people. She was not only known in the America but she is inspiration for the world. In her autobiography Michelle makes her voice aloud and gives a necessary example for future generations, especially of black girls. This kind of writing lets us discover the truthful side of women like suffer from discrimination but never stop learning, discovering and thinking. Connections are everywhere and help us build ourselves individually and socially.

Obama's identity represents relational identity based on the concept of relational-self. The identity of Obama is based on the interconnectedness among the different social aspects. Obama's identity is formed on the concept of relational self. The identity of Obama does not exist if she is separated from society. It means her life is possible due to the presence of different social phenomena. Thus, identity based on relational self that shows interdependence between the Obama and the then social, political, cultural, geographical and racial atmosphere in African American context

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