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Anchoring Amongst the Waves: Discursive Constructions of Motherhood and Addiction

Abstract The authors problematize essentialized notions of motherhood both ideologically and through criminalized women's accounts of correctional programming discourses that engage these notions as a way to foster "motherhood as praxis." Using data from interviews conducted with former female prisoners, we analyze how substance using mothers invoke the concept of a "good" mother by negotiating its meaning through techniques of self-surveillance and the surveillance of other criminalized mothers. Women use this renegotiated identity as inspiration to move away from activities in conflict with motherhood, such as using drugs and/or alcohol. Correctional authorities in drug rehabilitation programs encourage women to use motherhood as an "anchor" upon which to stop using and the women appeal to this identity to responsibilize their actions. Dichotomizing conceptualizations of a selfless, nurturing, and chaste mother with an addict identity is in fact a precarious rehabilitation tactic. We hypothesize that women who feel they cannot live up to the idealized notion of motherhood might use drugs to cope with feelings of inadequacy, a point that requires further research. Using a framework where motherhood is the key to recovery not only reinforces the addict identity should a woman relapse, it necessarily indicates failure as a mother.

Keywords Motherhood; Addiction; Identity; Prison; Women

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Women who use illicit drugs are rarely considered to be "good mothers." Popular media, legal, and correctional discourses construct drug using women as transgressors of both the law and the normative standards of femininity, which includes essentialized notions of motherhood, because of their criminality and substance use (McCorkel 1998; 2003; Boyd 1999; 2001; 2004; 2008; Malloch 1999; Hannah-Moffat 2000; 2001; Ferraro and Moe 2003; Moore 2007). These discourses seemingly construct a binary of "good" and "bad" mothers, and fail to consider socio-economic, political, and structural disadvantages that can have harmful implications for women involved in the criminal justice system. Rather than understanding these constructs as diametrically opposed, we suggest that the ideal of the "perfect mother" and the demonization of the "bad mother" exist on opposite ends of a continuum. These are extreme characterizations but are used as iconic figures against which we judge women in their capacities as mothers. Thinking of motherhood as existing on a continuum highlights how women at different times demonstrate strengths and weaknesses in their parenting.

For a woman who is addicted to illicit drugs, her identity as a mother is a precarious one. On the one hand, motherhood can be used to "anchor" women in their rehabilitation efforts as they create redemption scripts (Maruna 2001) that situate their identity as mothers as irrefutably connected to their recovery. At the same time, should a woman relapse, not only is her identity as a recovering drug user threatened, so too is her identity as a "good" (read drug free) mother. Using data collected from life history interviews with criminalized women, we argue that there is a hierarchy of motherhood that fails to recognize the structural impediments to reaching the ideal conceptualization of motherhood. This hierarchy is formulated and reinforced through various forms of surveillance (by both the self and others) and it impacts how women who are addicted to illicit drugs make sense of their identity and their attempts at recovery. To situate our research and the discourses used to engage in the larger motherhood surveillance project, we begin by presenting an overview of the new momism and intensive mothering literature.

Neoliberal Motherhood: New Momism and Intensive Mothering

Motherhood is often equated with being the essence of womanhood (McQuillan et al. 2008). For some women, motherhood acts as the primary, and oftentimes only, form of self-representation (Choi et al. 2005; Lax 2006) where the desire to become a mother is simultaneously described as a biological imperative and a choice (Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Enos 2001). Motherhood binds together notions of femininity, purity, and selflessness; above all, mothering is constructed as natural for women. Women are supposed to bear instinctive qualities with respect to bonding and connectedness to their children in order to detect their needs and minimize their distress (Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Hays 1996). Although research abounds that debunks the myth of a perfectly intuitive mother (Douglas and Michaels 2004; Choi et al. 2005; Henderson, Harmon and Houser 2010), these discourses on femininity and motherhood remain.[1] Women are meant to adopt, without conflict, the con-

[1] For example, the ideal mother is expected to sacrifice everything that may be a potential risk to the unborn fetus, regardless of the cost. Sacrifices include: abstinence from alcohol (Golden 2005); drugs (Campbell 1999); tobacco (Nichter et al. 2007); and a myriad of other "risky" activities, such as using a heating pad; eating certain meats, cheeses, and seafood; consuming cold/flu medicine; and caffeine, to name a few (Quéniart 1992).

struction of motherhood as moral, virtuous, and ultimately as fulfilling the project of womanhood; in this context, resistance to ideal motherhood is regarded as unnatural (Lax 2006).

Historically, there has always been an ideal conceptualization of motherhood; however, the attributes that make up this exemplar and the way motherhood is performed shift over time. The idyllic construction of contemporary motherhood is framed within a neoliberal context[2] – that is, with a focus on the mother as expert who is subject to techniques of responsibilization (Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Apple 2006; Taylor 2011). The term "new momism" illustrates what it means to be a mother in the neoliberal era. New momism borrows from the historical notions that womanhood is fulfilled by becoming a mother, and that women have an innate and thus superior ability to care for children. New momism calls women to be completely and constantly devoted to their children – physically, emotionally, and psychologically (Douglas and Michaels 2004). Women strategically practice the rhetoric of new momism by following the techniques of intensive mothering. Coined by Hays (1996), intensive mothering discourse contends that a family should be centered on the child, and a mother should naturally become engrossed in and by her child's life. True to the neoliberal framework, mothers are meant to become experts on their children and how to effectively parent. Ideal motherhood requires a mother to be educated about everything related to her children and thus supports the growing professionalization of motherhood (Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Apple 2006).

[2] The neoliberal era, roughly characterizing the 70's through to present day, promotes technologies of the self as a method of governance. With regards to state institutions, such as prisons, techniques emphasizing personal responsibility and fiscal efficiency dominate the landscape (Miller and Rose 1994).

By professionalizing motherhood women are expected to become experts on their children's lives. Developing this expertise entails becoming highly skilled at navigating her children's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs and keeping up with developmental milestones (Phoenix and Woollett 1991). For example, Apple (2006) finds that doctors expect mothers to be prepared to ask appropriate questions at their child's annual physical and that mothers be assertive in making decisions about their child's health and development while demonstrating deference to the doctor's unique expertise. The ideal mother participates in "scientific mothering," which consists of reading countless self-help books on mothering and child development (among the most popular is the *What to Expect* series) and taking an educated and pragmatic approach to the different advice. The ideal mother must find the balance between "embracing her natural instincts" and following the advice of *other* experts in order to effectively practice new momism.

While embedded in neoliberal discourse, the tenets of new momism cannot be regarded as deterministic, even if they are described as natural. Just as with other forms of social control, women are governed through their autonomy (Rose 1999). Women choose how they raise their children, how much time they spend with them, and how much they emotionally and psychologically invest in them. Douglas and Michaels (2004) note the contradiction inherent in new momism (and likely other neoliberal techniques of governance); that the actions one chooses are completely her own,but to stray from the suggestions offered by new momism discourses would be wholly unnatural and would illustrate "bad" mothering.

Women who are constituted as "bad" mothers are deemed so on two fronts: unnaturalness and failing

to meet their responsibilities. Campbell (2000) finds that the notions of maternal responsibility and maternal instinct are used to govern women, especially those who use illicit drugs; this means that if a woman becomes pregnant while addicted to drugs, her maternal instincts are expected to help her to refrain from using. As we explore below, criminalization and the use of illicit drugs taints women's identities as mothers (Enos 2001; Boyd 2004). Women who use illicit drugs are thought to focus on drugs rather than their children's well-being and thus are invariably creating a home full of chaos, disorder and neglect. In fact, Boyd claims that illicit drug use by a mother is thought of as a "…direct form of child maltreatment" (2004:10). By universally defining drug use as the antithesis of "good" or intensive mothering, we generate a kind of hierarchy of motherhood that situates those women who exercise new momism as diametrically opposed to criminalized mothers – especially those who use drugs. To discuss this hierarchy, we must first examine how the Canadian penal system discursively constructs motherhood.

Neoliberal Motherhood in the Canadian Penal System

There is sparse research on the role of a motherhood identity amongst criminalized and addicted women prior to the neoliberal era. We speculate that this dearth of knowledge comes from the small numbers of women prisoners before the 90's[3] and the subsequent lack of gender-specific programming. This is not to say that there were no programs designed for women during the welfare era[4]. In her genealogy of women's imprisonment, Hannah-Moffat (2001) describes how throughout the 50's and 60's the Kingston Prison for Women (P4W) offered lessons in domestic reform techniques (such as meal preparation, housekeeping, how to prepare for company, and personal grooming) as a mode of rehabilitation. These domestic programs differed from contemporary substance abuse programs because they were not based on expert discourses but rather were created and run by institutional staff and volunteers who focused on the value of gender specific skills, such as sewing and hairdressing: "the premise behind many of these strategies was that the women prisoners had not been trained by their biological mothers to govern themselves properly" (Hannah-Moffat 2001:102). This suggests that correctional programming efforts have a long history of trying to feminize criminalized women through the discursive production of ideal woman/mother.

The introduction of gender-responsive penality in the 90's acted as a gateway for women-centered interventions aimed at reproducing normative femininity through discourses about what it means to be a "good" mother. As Hannah-Moffat (2007) points out, correctional programs use white, middle-class standards upon which to evaluate a woman's ability to nurture and raise her

[3] Women are the fastest growing prison population worldwide (Peugh and Belenko 1999; Alemagno 2001; Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza 2001; Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004; Balfour and Comack 2006). Between 1997 and 2006, the number of federally sentenced women in Canada increased by 22 percent (Pollack 2010:114). Critical scholars suggest that the steep rise in the number of imprisoned women beginning in the 90's comes from the symbiotic relationship between the "tough on crime" rhetoric and the "war on drugs."

[4] The welfare state is a governing trend to redistribute wealth towards those who are socially disadvantaged and where the state acts as a "safety net" (Rice, Goodin and Parpo 2006). For most western nations, the post World War II era (50's and 60's) was a time allowed for an inclusive political rhetoric that facilitated increased public spending at various levels of state intervention, including prisons (Garland 2001).

children[5]. These normative standards do not always represent the material lives and mothering techniques of criminalized women but are nonetheless used to reinforce the feminine ideal and subsequently govern how criminalized women practice mothering. The gender-responsive approach to women's corrections that emerged after the closure of P4W in 2000 is largely built on relational theory, which posits that close relationships (often with intimate partners and children) are particularly important for women because it is through these connections that women (more so than men) develop a sense of self-worth (Covington and Bloom 2006). This characterization of women as primarily wives and mothers contributes to penal programming's focus on essentialized womanhood. Hannah-Moffat (2010) notes the potential for positive systematic change to penal policies using feminist-inspired theory but is wary of how woman/motherhood and femininity are operationalized on the front lines. For example, programming developed from a relational perspective takes for granted that women want to be the primary caregivers to their children and choose to make motherhood the center of their identity (Hannah-Moffat 2010). In fact, women who choose to dissolve their relationship with their children, even if done for the child's welfare, are often pathologized and considered to be especially risky (Hannah-Moffat 2007; Kilty 2011).

When developing a woman's correctional plan, assessments of her risks and needs include an evaluation of her parenting capacity. According to Hannah-Moffat (2007) motherhood is attributed not only as a "need" for women but also as a potential risk to be managed if she does not conform to dominant understandings of mothering. In practice, this becomes a form of identity management. It is clear that negotiating incongruent identities, such as mother, addict, and prisoner, is difficult, and that addiction and incarceration stigmatize the individual and disrupt identity management (Jewkes 2005). As a result, ex-prisoners commonly reach back into their past to re-center older, more positive and often normative constructions of self (for example, as mothers) in order to discard their criminalized or drug using selves (Goffman 1961; 1963; Lofland 1969; Baker and Carson 1999; Baker 2000; Maruna 2001; Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph 2002; Kilty 2011). In fact, Baker writes that women must engage in stigma management techniques that "transform their identities to those of «ordinary» people. This can be done by reverting to a «true self,» extending an identity present during addiction, or creating a new, emergent identity" (2000:864).

Maruna contends that as part of the identity transformation process, ex-prisoners craft a "redemption script," beginning with "a believable story of why they are going straight" (2001:86). It is important for recovering drug users to acknowledge that they identify with normative understandings of motherhood in order to present themselves as a redemptive subject (Lofland 1969; Maruna 2001; Brown and Bloom 2009). Participants in this study adopted an essentialized construction of motherhood as the root of their redemption scripts. Most participants repeatedly reiterated the phrase, "I am a good mother" but also recognized that substance use was at odds with their conceptualization of motherhood (Baker and Carson 1999). Giordano and colleagues describe such elements (such as motherhood or marital relationships) in the person's environment as "hooks for change," which act as "catalysts for lasting change when they energize rather fundamental shifts in identity and changes in the meaning and desirability of deviant/criminal behavior itself" (2002:992). Hannah-Moffat (2010) argues that penal interventions use motherhood as a tool to regulate women and reinforce normative femininity. In other words, by teaching mothers how to govern their children, the women themselves are also being governed.

This research shows that motherhood acts less as a "hook" that the individual catches themselves upon, and more as an "anchor" that the women bind themselves or feel bound to, and which they identify as "always already" present, and thus as a component of their true or core self. Moreover, this research problematizes using motherhood as an anchor (or hook) because it may not result in lasting change but rather a cycle of drug use and desistance. The danger in "anchoring" identity to an essentialized conceptualization of motherhood is that it may create a feedback loop of abstaining from drugs "to be a good mom," while at the same time using drugs to cope with feelings of inadequacy in that role, an argument that correctional authorities often suggest drug using women endorse to justify or deny responsibility for their continued drug use (Prochaska and DiClemente 1992; Boyd 1999; 2001; 2004; 2007; Malloch 1999; Hannah-Moffat 2000; 2001; Maruna 2001; Grant et al. 2008; Kilty 2011).

For example, every participant in this study described how prison program providers, authorities, and correctional workers emphasized, as a tactic to get them to stop using, that the mother component of their identity *should* be(come) their true or core self (Loftus and Namaste 2011). Similarly, McCorkel found that in correctional drug rehabilitation programs, staff members confront women about their drug use and "the nature of their *real* selves" (1998; 2003:51) in an effort to correct what they see as a failure to take responsibility. Discursively invoking essentialized constructions of motherhood to empower women (Hannah-Moffat 2000; 2001) to abstain from substances (Moore 2007) not only reifies the dichotomy of "good" and "bad" motherhood but it sets up a fragile paradigm for success, where a relapse may reinforce the addict self as their master status. Correctional programs rely on normative understandings of motherhood and thus fail to account for the context within which these relationships exist (Hannah-Moffat 2010). Blamed for their poor decisions, many women are likely to feel solely responsible for any setbacks that may come from their inability to live up to the expectations of ideal motherhood. Noting that correctional discourses promote essentialized notions of motherhood is not new (Diduck 1998; McCorkel 1998; 2003; Boyd 1999; 2004; Hannah-Moffat 2000; 2001; Greaves et al. 2004; Moore 2007). However, this paper examines the role these discourses play in the construction and negotiation of identity.

Methodological Note

This study is based on life history interviews conducted with twenty-two former female prisoners. Participants were located through community-based agencies and halfway houses, which, in order to maintain anonymity, cannot be identified. Most participants experienced homelessness at some point by living on the street, in a shelter, or in a drug/crack house. Findings from this research should not be generalized to other groups of users. The interviews were conducted and audio-recorded in the halfway houses and were then transcribed verbatim. Each woman was paid $20 for her participation and was offered transportation or provided

[5] Hannah-Moffat (2007), like others (Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Douglas and Michaels 2004), is not specific about what constitutes white, middle-class mothering techniques.

public transit vouchers to assist with travel costs. There were no exclusionary criteria and all the women who wished to participate were interviewed; all participants were eighteen years of age or older and signed an informed consent form approved by Simon Fraser University's Ethics Review Board.

In order to recruit participants, the first author spent between approximately 15-20 hours a week engaging in observational fieldwork in the halfway houses where the women resided. She first gained entrée by meeting with the Executive Directors and house managers, who were interested and welcomed the research, as they felt it would showcase the needs of the women they serve and thus the difficulty of their work. Five months of fieldwork allowed Kilty to blend in with the goings-on of the agencies and the halfway houses, generate rapport with staff members and the women, and have countless casual conversations and informal meetings with staff members and the women who lived in the house and/or used the agency's services. This interaction helped to foster a detailed knowledge of, and familiarity with agency and house policies, procedures, and mandates, as well as the agencies' organizational and fiscal structures and constraints. The interviews were semi-structured, lasted between two and four and a half hours, and covered a variety of topics, including: childhood life, familial and romantic relationship history, histories of abuse, substance use, and self-harming behaviors, as well as discussions of imprisonment, reintegration, health, power, identity and resistance.

The women ranged from 24 to 65 years of age. Consistent with the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women in Canadian prisons, 9 participants self-identified as First Nations or Aboriginal, the remainder self-identified as white.[6] Of the twenty-two participants, 8 served both provincial and federal time in prison, while 14 served provincial time only. In all, 14 were mothers, 7 of whom had lost primary or total custody of one or more of their children to social services or a family member due to their drug use and criminalization. All twenty-two participants were self-identified as having problematically used drugs and/or alcohol, but only 17 identified their substance use as an ongoing struggle in their lives. Similar to the temporal length of the women's addictions, which ranged from 4 to 25 years, the women's drug of choice also varied – with some identifying it as: crack cocaine (4); powdered cocaine (4); crystal meth (2); heroin (4); and alcohol (2). While the women's index offences ranged from solicitation, to drug possession, drug trafficking, theft, fraud, assault, and murder, 20 participants claimed that substances were involved in their carrying out of those offences. The remaining sections of this article examine how criminalized women who have experienced problematic substance use (which they characterize as addiction) construct their identities as mothers in light of the difficulties they face as recovering substance users.

The Role of Surveillance in Creating a Hierarchy of Motherhood

There is a common (mis)perception that criminalized mothers willfully ignore the call of new momism, but it is unlikely that any mother could miss the messages and pressures imposed by the media, other moms, and the broader social world about what it means to be a selfless and virtuous mother (Boyd 2004). However, it is of note that the definition of new momism is drawn from a white, middle-class interpretation of motherhood (Boyd 2004; Douglas and Michaels 2004; Gillies and Edwards 2006; McQuillan et al. 2008; Brown and Bloom 2009). In the penal context, this fact has two important consequences. First, mothers who are not recognized as women practicing new momism are characterized as lazy and neglectful (Douglas and Michaels 2004) and mothers who use illicit drugs are constructed as immature, out of control, and deviant (Boyd 2004). Given the over-representation of First Nations and Aboriginal women in Canadian prisons (Hannah-Moffat 2001; Boyd 2004), new momism discourse in the carceral context contributes to the creation of a hierarchy of motherhood that is likely to flow along racial lines (Taylor 2011). For example, in a similarly racialized construction of the "welfare mother," Douglas and Michaels note that "…because however insecure we felt in our identities as «mothers,» we suddenly (if briefly) felt very confident and virtuous when juxtaposed to this other, bad mother" (2004:199). In turn, this hierarchy leaves criminalized women with little capital upon which to reclaim their identities as "good" mothers (Gillies and Edwards 2006).

The second consequence of building the new momist discourse from a place of privilege is that women who are categorized as "bad" mothers may come to recognize themselves as failures. Indeed, research shows that regardless of race or social standing, many women feel doubt and guilt in their capacity as mothers (Choi et al. 2005; Henderson et al. 2010). For women who use illicit drugs, their identification as "bad" mothers (either by themselves, by others, or both) leads to an overall sense of failure in that role. As Stacey explains:

> I think about getting out on parole, fucking up, going back, and you know, and just not wanting it in my life anymore. You know, like I'm not like my mother, but I am. I chose drugs over my own daughter. And, I don't want her to grow up and, either I did it, a hit and I died or, you know, I'm on the streets, somebody killed me, and I already feel bad now because I chose drugs over her. So, I don't want her to grow up and I'm still a drug addict.

Stacey's discourse not only illustrates how she feels drug use makes her a "bad" mother, it also shows her realization of the potential harm of her actions and the responsibility and love she feels toward her daughter. This quote illustrates the co-existence of multiple identities – that despite her drug use and criminalized status she remains a caring mother. While the women's narratives clearly illustrate the creation of a hierarchy of motherhood, it is important to recognize that one component of a woman's identity (that is, drug user) does not represent the totality of her identity. Knowing this, the ideal construction of motherhood created by new momism discourses sets unrealistic expectations regarding women's desire and ability to devote their lives to their children while simultaneously excluding already marginalized women from positively identifying as "good" mothers. As aforementioned, criminalized women, like most (if not all) women, are aware of the hierarchy of motherhood and their place on that continuum in light of their drug use. Positioning themselves on this continuum requires women to engage in different forms of surveillance as a way to monitor the status and quality of their mothering.

As Foucault (1977) describes in his analysis of Bentham's panopticon, surveillance is permanent when one believes they are always visible; this state of consciousness is used to foster vigilant

[6] Although race is an essential component to identity, our data does not reveal significant differences in the mothering narratives presented by the Aboriginal and white participants. We suggest that future research adopt a more fully developed intersectional approach to examine the effects of race and ethnicity on mothering discourses.

self-surveillance. Surveillance is a key component in the development of a hierarchy of motherhood, and takes three broad forms: self-surveillance, surveillance by general others, and state surveillance. Phoenix and Woollett (1991) note that surveillance performed by state authorities, such as social workers or psychologists, often targets racially minoritized and/or impoverished mothers and their children with the goal of diverting these children from a life of crime that is otherwise constructed as predetermined because of their mothers' inadequacies. By stressing an incarcerated woman's need to properly govern her children, she is responsibilized for their future behavior (Hannah-Moffat 2007; 2010; Henderson et al. 2010:233). Within this framework, less-than-perfect parenting is considered a social problem requiring intervention (Phoenix and Woollett 1991).

Women engage in self-surveillance as part of their apprehension of failing as a mother and the stress and guilt that come from a sense that they do not meet the criteria for "good" motherhood (Henderson et al. 2010). For example, Joyce recounted how her self-assessment as a "bad" mother acts as a roadblock to taking the steps to regain custody of her children:

> I'm working on it. I have a lawyer for my children and I've obtained a lawyer for myself, representing me for my, to see my children. So that ball's started rolling because I noticed I get to saying I'm going to call the lawyer and I never go through with it because of that inner voice saying, "Well, look what you've done anyway, you're not worth having them." And then I say, OK, maybe it's better if I wait for them to come to me.

Joyce, like so many women in her position, internalized the normative ideal of what it means to be a "good" mother (Henderson et al. 2010) and judges herself unacceptable. While Joyce's narrative primarily exemplifies self-surveillance, her views are also situated in relation to how other women monitor and view her addiction, which together create an environment of perpetual surveillance, examination and judgement.

Surveillance of a woman's abilities as a mother is common both in and out of prison. Enos' (2001) research revealed that women in prison judge one another's claims about motherhood by discriminating between the types of crimes they committed, their drug use (especially that which takes place around their children), and the woman's enthusiasm to return to her children. Reflecting this finding, and her status as a white, middle class mother of two sentenced to time in prison for committing fraud for the first time in her mid-forties, Shelley, expresses her negative feelings about mothers using drugs:

> What surprised me the most was the women that, OK, I appreciate that you use and it takes over you, but when you have a baby – and you hear the women, "Oh, my boyfriend is picking me up and he's gonna have a ball, whatever, crack, ready for me when I get in the car." I mean, it made me sick to my stomach. And they were all…they were all like that. Nobody said, "Oh, I'm clean now, I've been clean for X number of days and I'm gonna stay clean and I'm gonna have this baby and I'm gonna be healthy." You didn't hear that.

Likewise, Shelley describes women who appear to choose drugs over their children, as she felt her mother did, as failing to demonstrate the required level of selflessness to be considered a "good" mother. Shelley's discourse, which clearly demonstrates the creation of a hierarchy of motherhood, also illustrates how her moral judgement of other women is rooted in her own pain of having been a child whose life was affected by a mother who used drugs:

> What you're doing is affecting your children. What you're doing is hurting those kids for the rest of their lives…Yeah, give them up. Give them to somebody who cares because obviously you don't. You cannot get out of your own self-world, long enough to take care of your kids; to go to that PTA meeting, to go to that baseball game, to be on time, to make supper.

Shelley is speaking as a fellow criminalized woman, but her narrative also demonstrates that of a hurt child who wished her own mother had stopped using. The result of women engaging in the surveillance of one another is that they are participating in the creation of a supposed dualism between "good" and "bad" mothers. In fact, Henderson and colleagues write: "there does not need to be a policing agent to regulate mothers because they are doing it themselves" (2010:241). Shelley's narrative also demonstrates how proponents of new momism discourse often fail to consider the structural consequences of creating a hierarchy of motherhood, such as the responsibilization of the individual (Moore 2007). In this light, surveillance is used as a tool to demonstrate how one's inability to reach the ideals of new momism, for example by becoming criminalized, is tolerable given other more egregious drug using mothers. Being a former prisoner does not negate a woman's interest in distinguishing what accounts for "bad" mothering. Regardless of their own incarceration, participants such as Lindsay attempted to distinguish their personal narratives of motherhood from those of other mothers in prison:

> Yeah, and I find it just to be really selfish…to be very selfish. Pregnant women were in there, you know? And I'm not one to talk, I mean I went to jail with two children at home, you know? But, I found them just to be very selfish and I can't imagine being pregnant and having the baby and babies at home. This one girl, there were four, her mother was looking after them and they were all like, under the age of five, you know… I don't know. I don't know if it's right; young and pregnant women just not caring, being selfish and not caring about their…their unborn children. And there was many pregnant women in jail. So many.

Although Lindsay also spent time in prison and was separated from her children, she understands her situation to be very different from imprisoned women she conceives of as selfish – a trait she does not attribute to herself. For example, Lindsay stated that she was not selfish because "I kept in touch with my kids all the time. I wrote them letters and talked to them on the phone, and as soon as I got out I saw them. I see them regularly and I got sober so I could be a good mother." Selfishness is a personal attribute or characteristic that stands in opposition to the values of new momism, and, as Lindsay's quote exemplifies, selfishness is inextricably linked to being a "bad" mother. Likewise, Eleanor compared her familial situation with her observations of other women in prison: "To see her come into jail six months pregnant, with a crack baby. Some people have it worse off. My kids are lucky that I didn't show them that world." Although she is trying to distance herself from the image of the "bad" mother, Eleanor's narrative further entrenches the continuum of motherhood through which she attempts to reconstruct herself as a "good" (or at least "better" than some) mother. By participating in ongoing self-surveillance, as well as the surveillance of others in similarly marginalized situations, criminalized women may redefine the values of "good" motherhood so that the ideals of new momism shift to a set of expectations that fit within a framework where the mother is addicted to illicit drugs. The notion of a division between "good" and "bad" mothers, however, remains. As

we explore below, given that criminalized women are problematically identified as inherently "bad" mothers, it is perplexing that motherhood is used as an anchor in addiction treatment.

Anchoring Motherhood: Re-defining the Good Mother

Not surprisingly, in an effort to manage the stigma of being a substance-using mother, criminalized women frequently reject deviant or stigmatized identity labels by singling out an essentialized notion of motherhood as the defining component of their "true self," master status, or identity. For example, giving up custody of your child, let alone having them removed, is especially stigmatizing insofar as it is seen as a violation of idealized motherhood (Comack 1996; Diduck 1998; Malloch 1999; Hannah-Moffat 2000; 2001; Comack and Balfour 2004). Emma, who gave up custody of her young son and daughter, commented on the social construction of "good" motherhood, and the consequence of violating the axioms of this construction:

> I had two kids at home, I was working two jobs – I was dancing and I was bartending and I was 17. I had the day off, my son had been colicky for a week and a half, I fell asleep on the couch and my daughter climbed up on the stove and got second and third degree burns while I was sleeping. When I woke up she was playing on the floor beside me saying, "Mommy we got boo-boos," and I realized that I couldn't do it. That was the hardest decision I ever had to make in my life – to give her up. I gave her and her brother up to my mom. So my son has just recently come back into my care, a month and a half ago, but I've had some access to them all their lives. It's hard because when I was inside, I heard this one guard say "How could she give up her own kids, just to get high." So it doesn't matter if you put your kids first and give them up because you can't be the mother you want to be, you're still a bad mom.

If the childless mother is incomplete, removing a child from a woman may increase her feelings of inadequacy, self-loathing, guilt and shame. Mothers who have drug and/or alcohol addictions and who entrust their children to the care of others, seen by them as a selfless and thus motherly act, are not perceived as "good" mothers because their acts of self-sacrifice go unacknowledged as such (Comack 1996; Diduck 1998; Boyd 1999; 2001; 2004; Comack and Balfour 2004) and are instead characterized as indicative of the mother's riskiness (Hannah-Moffat 2010).

Although many participants re-defined what it meant to be a "good" mother, others adopted the discourses of intensive mothering and saw addiction and involvement with the criminal justice system as diametrically opposed to the ideals of new momism (Hays 1996; Douglas and Michaels 2004). For example, Shelley's script reflects the neoliberal rhetoric of individual choice that undermines the consideration of structural disadvantages or barriers:

> You know, I find it, if you're gonna have children, if you're going to decide to sleep with that person and then you're right there then, making that choice, I've now given up responsibility of putting myself first, there's somebody else to put first. Period.

While the rhetoric of new momism is visible in Shelley's comment, it is also clear that criminalized women (like Emma, above) negotiate the normative standards of motherhood in order to represent themselves as "good" mothers.

Many participants resisted the assumption that the multiple identities of addict, criminal, and mother could not co-exist (Baker and Carson 1999; Enos 2001) but noted that the challenge of re-imagining these identities is most apparent while incarcerated. Given the constant surveillance in prison, those women who do not elicit an acceptable performance of motherhood are admonished as "bad" mothers and are identified as risky; however, some women attributed their lack of visible mothering as a testament to putting their children's well-being before their own. For example, Catherine used the language of new momism – selflessness, compassion, and responsibility – to explain her decision *not* to see her child while in prison:

> My daughter would have been old enough to come and see me, but I didn't want to take the chance of having her start to cry when between glass, what can you do, nothing. So I'm not going to do that to her.

Here, Catherine maintains the division between "good" and "bad" motherhood but uses characteristics that typically describe "good" mothers (the desire to comfort and nurture an upset child) in order to retain her identity as a caring and thoughtful mother in spite of her criminalization and addiction to illicit drugs. When attempting to reconcile the co-existence of these oppositional identities, participants used their statuses as mothers as the anchor upon which to frame their attempt at desistance from drug use (Plumridge and Chetwynd 1999; McIntosh and McKeganey 2000; Maruna 2001).

The context in which women attempt to reconstruct their self-concept also impacts the ways they manage their identities. For example, the gender-responsive treatment programs touted by correctional authorities use motherhood as a tool through which criminalized women can manage their substance use, but they do so with value-laden identity caricatures as goalposts and by emphasizing the need to make "responsible choices" (Plumridge and Chetwynd 1999; Baker 2000; Hannah-Moffat 2007; 2010; Moore 2007; Grant et al. 2008; Kilty 2011). By suggesting that women can *choose* to stop using drugs women are encouraged to discover that their children deserve a mother who will prioritize their needs over drug use (Boyd 1999; Baker 2000; McIntosh and McKeganey 2000; Maruna 2001; Ferraro and Moe 2003; Gubrium 2008).

Subsequently, many participants repeatedly stressed that "being a good mother" was what they *should* be doing; for example, Sophie, a drug treatment court participant, stated:

> I don't wanna end up going in. I'm fighting for my son right now, and a stupid little slip-up right now is going to screw everything and I'm so scared. I don't want my son to end up being adopted or something. That's my biggest fear because I love my boy. I would never hurt him in any way. Like I raised my girls and they're perfect kids. And he doesn't deserve what his mother's doing to him right now. Like, I mean, he needs his mom and I'm screwing it up for him. He's my motivation right now. Everything is for him. I don't want to be in jail and my son coming to visit. I don't want that, you know? I wanna be a normal mom. It's not his fault that I'm being a screw-up. But, he's paying the price. It's hard. It's hard to watch your child cry when they have to take him through the door, to go somewhere else. I don't want somebody else raising my boy, that's my baby! So I'm fighting really hard to get him and I'm fighting really hard to stay off the drugs. That's all I have to do… That's what the programmers keep telling me, it's up to me and that when I use I am failing my kids and when I'm clean I can be a mother again, they talk about that a lot. And being a mother makes me feel like a woman. I feel whole, when I'm with my children. I don't feel that way when I'm not with them, you know? It's weird. I feel complete when I'm with my children. And when something like this is going on, I'm… I'm lost.

Sophie was preoccupied with the fear of losing custody of her son because of a drug relapse; by re-centering her successes as a mother to her first two children (she did not use crack until well after her

third child was born), Sophie is trying to re-establish herself as a "good" mother (Maruna 2001). This narrative reconstruction, or what Goffman (1963) refers to as "reverting to an unspoiled identity," allows Sophie to criticize the Children's Aid Society's (CAS) decision to remove her son from her care because of her recent drug use, which she claims ignores the fact that she successfully raised her two older children. This tactic led to a cyclical experience of drug use to cope with these feelings, which then justified the court's decision to remove her child. CAS's decision to remove her son from her care reflects Diduck's finding that when a woman comes before the law as a mother, her

> subjectivity comes laden with requirements of motherhood: chastity, self-sacrifice, nurture and care and she also comes bearing a mystical maternal connection to her child. How well she is able to negotiate these factors in the circumstances of her life determines whether she is essentialized as a good or bad mother. (1998:210-211)

Sophie's narrative demonstrates the tension between being a "good" mother (because of her past maternal experiences) and a "bad" mother (because of her current drug use) and the incoherence that comes with developing this hierarchy.

The sense of self that women derive from their identity as a mother (Loftus and Namaste 2011) acts as the anchor that can support their "addict in recovery," "recovered addict," or "drug free" identity. By anchoring their core identity in their roles as mothers, the participants also actively endorsed the language of new momism in an effort to construct their children as particularly strong emotionally:

> [My children] are really proud of me for pulling through. It's amazing that they're being proud of me for pulling through, doing time for what I did. (Shirley-Anne)

> My family is my big strength right now… My daughter, she's what keeps me going. Trying to stay clean for her. (Stacey)

Conceptualizing motherhood as an identity anchor typifies the ideals of new momism, particularly when correctional authorities and other mothers tout motherhood as the embodiment of strength and selflessness (Brown and Bloom 2009; Robbins, Martin and Surratt 2009; Kreager, Matsueda and Erosheva 2010; Loftus and Namaste 2011).

Mirroring much of the existing literature (Diduck 1998; Boyd 1999; 2004; 2007; 2008; Baker 2000; Maruna 2001; Greaves et al. 2004; Geiger and Fischer 2005), several participants described how thinking about their children in an altruistic way, which they described as "putting them first," was a strong motivator to become and remain "clean." Relying on the concept of intensive mothering to encourage sobriety and responsible parenting simultaneously reifies drug use as failure, which caused several participants to, as Elaine stated, "want to use more to numb it out." Geiger and Fischer (2005) claim that for criminalized women, separation from their children can cause a feeling of anomie – which again defines women by their biological role as mothers and criminalization as compromising that potential self. Sandra felt that her status as a mother was negatively impacted by her addiction to the point that until she was able to completely abstain from drug use she could not be a mother to her child:

> Yeah, but I have a lot of things to change before I can get [my son] back. I've got to change my whole pattern and my whole lifestyle. It's hard. Especially when you've been like that your whole life. Every time I use, I'm losing a bit of myself [identity] and my ability to be a good mother and a good role model. It makes me feel worse, like there is something wrong with me – that I can't just stop using so I can be a good mom. Every time I relapse I feel more and more like maybe I'm just not cut out to do it. Don't get me wrong – I want to be with my son. But, like the programs teach you, you can't be a good mother when you use drugs because you don't think clearly – you think about drugs not your kids.

Enlisting an essentialized notion of motherhood to promote a clean and sober identity dangerously raises the stakes of failure, without a corresponding increase in the benefit to the criminalized mother's identity. This is especially precarious when correctional understandings of motherhood ignore the emotional and practical challenges criminalized women encounter when attempting to perform normative mothering (Gillies and Edwards 2006). Eleanor describes the stress of relying on new momism discourses while trying to recover from addiction:

> I'm petrified that I'm going to crack under pressure. I have two outlooks in my life, either when it's going too good I usually crash and get high or it's going too bad…yeah, so if I'm seeing something and it's going like really good I am gonna sabotage it cause it's too good to be true.

While a woman's identity as a mother may help her overcome a negative self-concept, for example, the "addict" self, life events that demonstrate or confirm that negative self-concept may strengthen its essence, in her mind and for those around her. Ongoing surveillance by the self, others, and the state thus works to reinforce the stigma (prisoner, criminal, addict) the woman is trying to manage (Enos 2001; Ferraro and Moe 2003; Henderson et al. 2010).

Conclusion

In this paper we explore motherhood, incarceration, addiction, and identity. Given the rhetoric of new momism and intensive mothering (Hays 1996), women are under immense pressure to perform the role of the ideal mother, characterized by absolute and unwavering commitment to their children, selflessness, compassion, and nurturing – all of which are suggested to be natural qualities in women. The neoliberal principles stemming from new momism are reproduced in the carceral context where normative definitions of motherhood are used to evaluate a woman's needs/risks and where mothering is used as a tool through which to govern women and their children (Hannah-Moffat 2007; 2010). Using the ideals of new momism, a continuum of motherhood is developed to clearly differentiate between "good" and "bad" mothers; this hierarchy is used as a tool for self-surveillance and the surveillance of other women. By engaging in techniques of surveillance, women are able to rank themselves in relation to others, which then allows them to self-identify as a "good" or "better" mother despite failing to reach the perfection sought through new momism (Henderson et al. 2010).

The motherhood hierarchy is complicated when mothers are addicted to illicit drugs and encounter the criminal justice system. Women must re-define what it means to be a "good" mother in light of their drug use and imprisonment, demonstrating that while they speak in terms of a hierarchy their actions reflect how motherhood exists on a continuum. Women often create redemption scripts (Maruna 2001) by prioritizing their status and roles as mothers ahead of their desire to use drugs. Giordano and colleagues (2002) research describes this element as a "hook for change;" however, we suggest that motherhood is more accurately described as an "anchor" because motherhood acts as a constant and implicitly heavy role around which other components of a woman's identity (that is,

recovering addict) take shape. Correctional authorities and drug treatment programming encourage using motherhood as an anchor for change as part of their gender responsiveness (Boyd 1999; 2001; 2004; 2007; Hannah-Moffat 2000; 2001; 2007; 2010). That these discourses impact women's substance use and/or potential recovery is acknowledged here but precisely how they operate remains an important avenue for future research. While many participants took up this discourse and used their motherhood identity to spearhead attempts at recovery, we argue that using motherhood as an anchor in these efforts may be counterproductive to some women, particularly should they relapse. When drug use is discursively constructed as an indicator of "bad" motherhood, any relapse is not only constituted as an impediment to successful recovery but it also denotes failure as a mother. Being judged by others or self-identifying as a failed mother may have the unintended consequence of women using drugs to cope (Enos 2001; Robbins et al. 2009). As one participant stated, "every time I use again after getting my shit together, it just spirals. It just makes me feel like I am a terrible mother." Ultimately, we invite scholars, policy makers and front-line personnel to consider the unintended consequences of using motherhood as an anchor for change. To do so requires examining how women are regulated by formal structures beyond themselves and other women.

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Constructing and Deconstructing Teen Pregnancy as a Social Problem

Abstract The purpose of this paper is to examine teenage pregnancy as a social problem using social constructionist perspective. Analyzing qualitative interviews with 11 young mothers and relying on the media analysis of popular North American newspapers and magazines, I examine claims-making activity around the definition of teenage pregnancy as a social problem. I start this paper, situating my arguments in the social constructionist literature on social problems. In the second part of this paper I review the literature on teen pregnancy and identify three major themes that dominate academic and public discourse on pregnancy as a social problem. After describing the methodological approach I took to conduct this study, I move on to present my findings. I demonstrate that in negotiating their mothering skills, young teenage mothers construct their claims about pregnancy, parenthood and their future *vis-à-vis* the dominant public discourse on teen pregnancy. They reconstruct their pregnancy and mothering as non-deviant, claim their status as mature and responsible mothers and challenge the importance of biological age as a predictor of successful mothering. I summarize this paper suggesting that these young women's narratives should be considered the claims-making activity of a marginalized population of young mothers who are rarely heard in public, yet they do challenge our assumptions about teen mothering and find their own way to resist the dominant discourse on teen pregnancy.

Keywords Teen Pregnancy; Social Problems; Social Constructionism; Mothering; Canada

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In the past several years, teen pregnancy has become a common topic in the public arena. Despite the declining number of teen pregnancy in North America (Mitchell 2008), pregnant teenagers often appear in newspaper articles, popular TV shows and headlines of entertainment magazines. The recently screened movie *Juno*, for instance, featured the story about a 16-year-old girl who got pregnant and decided to have the baby and gave it up for adoption. The news about pregnancies of young stars makes headlines in popular entertainment magazines. It was hard to ignore the media's interest in the teen pregnancy drama of Sarah Palin's family, or the story about Massachusetts' high school girls who decided to have babies together.

While decades ago pregnant teens were secretly sent away to have their babies and to give them up for adoption, today, it seems, there is more tolerance for young mothers (Gulli 2008). Partially, the changing attitudes reflect the loosening of motherhood standards, as we have become more accepting of diverse experiences of motherhood in general acknowledging not only teen mothers but also older mothers, queer mothers, and other women who previously would be socially excluded (Gregory 2007). It is wrong to assume, however, that we have stopped defining teen pregnancy as a social problem (Duncan 2007). Unlike first-time older mothers, who are often high-educated middle class women with steady incomes and considerable political power (Gregory 2007), teen mothers do not have the financial and social means to stand up for their rights. Almost automatically, we associate teen pregnancy with poverty, drugs, unstable families, and unhappy babies (Checkland and Wong 2000; Arai 2009). The consensus that teen pregnancy is a social "problem" is remarkably universal – not only North America, but many European countries "struggle" with teen pregnancy and seek to "reduce it," "lower it" or "fight it" (Byfield 1999; Checkland and Wong 2000; Monahan 2001; McKay 2006; Duncan 2007).

Since the teen pregnancy is constructed as related to different underlying social causes, the discussions about prevention provide a range of different *solutions*. Some claims-makers construct teen pregnancy as linked to the provision of sexual education and, as a result, advocate promoting such education or cancelling it (George 2005; Kotz 2007). Others see teen pregnancy as a result of the poor availability of contraceptives (Immen and Freeze 1998). There are those who suggest that teen pregnancy is linked to poor social conditions, and thus can only be reduced by improving the provision of social services in a community (Coleman and Cater 2006). Psychologists, on the other hand, often link teen pregnancy to internal individual problems, such as low self-esteem and poor attachment (Musick 1993).

This paper does not make a statement about the usefulness of the proposed solutions. Nor does the paper seek to identify *what* makes teen pregnancy a social problem. Instead of stepping into the debates about teen pregnancy, I seek to understand *how* these debates are managed and how teen mothers negotiate their status as mothers in the context of negative social perceptions about teenage pregnancy. Using a social constructionist perspective on social problems, which examines the process by which claims-making activity constructs a putative condition into a social problem (Spector and Kitsuse 2006), I show (1) how teen pregnancy is constructed in the media and (2) how this definition is being contested and resisted by teenage mothers.

I start this paper, situating my arguments in the social constructionist literature on social problems. In the second part of this paper I review the literature on teen pregnancy and identify three major themes that dominate academic and public discourse on pregnancy as a social problem. Specifically, I identify the discourses on the welfare of teen mothers and their children, their health and

the moral aspects of teen pregnancy as being especially dominant in constructing teen pregnancy as a social problem. After describing the methodological approach I took to conduct this study, I move on to present my findings. I demonstrate that in negotiating their mothering skills, young teenage mothers construct their claims about pregnancy, parenthood and their future *vis-à-vis* the dominant public discourse on teen pregnancy. They reconstruct their pregnancy and mothering as non-deviant, claim their status as mature and responsible mothers and challenge the importance of biological age as a predictor of successful mothering. I summarize this paper suggesting that these young women's narratives should be considered the claims-making activity of a marginalized population of young mothers who are rarely heard in public, yet they do challenge our assumptions about teen mothering and find their own way to resist the dominant discourse on teen pregnancy.

Theoretical Framework

Until the 70's, the study of social problem in sociology was characterized by an approach that analyzed social problems as *objective* conditions. Consequently, sociologists worked on identifying the causes of problematic conditions and looked for suitable solutions (Spector and Kitsuse 2006). For instance, if the problem of homelessness was understood as an objective condition, the scholars sought to understand why people end up on the street and what should be done to eliminate this problem.

Spector and Kitsuse (2006) redirected the thrust of social problems study by suggesting an entirely different approach. They challenged the definition of social problems as *objective* conditions. Relying on social constructionism, which asserts that social reality is constructed through social interaction and, therefore, cannot be treated as objectively given (Berger and Luckmann 1966), Spector and Kitsuse suggested that "the notion that social problems are a kind of *condition* must be abandoned in favor of a conception of them as a kind of *activity*" (2006:73). The work of a sociologist studying social problems should be devoted to the study of the activity out of which the definition of a social problem arises: "we define social problems as the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions" (Spector and Kitsuse 2006:75).

The social constructionist approach to the study of social problems has gained significant currency among sociologists (Holstein and Miller 2003). Examining social problems as claims-making activity, sociologists have been focusing their studies on such questions as who the claims-makers are, how they construct their claims, and how they present them to their audiences (Loseke 2003). Ibarra and Kitsuse (2003), for example, identified different styles that allow claims-makers to engage in social problem work applying a specific vocabulary. Quite often, however, those claims that are the loudest and those claim-makers who are most visible attract the attention of sociologists, while the voices of marginalized populations remain unheard and (therefore) not studied (Miller 2003). Miller suggests that sociologists often trap themselves into investigating dominant forms of claims-making (such as public campaigns, lobbying, political activism), dismissing the process of any other forms of claims-making as "just talk" (2003:107). As a result, Miller (2003) calls on sociologists to introduce into the study of social problems' claims-making a variety of claims-making styles that are employed by marginalized populations but depoliticized by dominant claims-makers. Introducing poststructuralist notions into the constructionist perspective, Miller (2003) argues that marginalized populations often lack the very language to express their claims in a way that gets them heard as legitimate claims or even as claims:

> *It is only from the standpoint of the powerful (from the perspective of the dominant discourses) that "some" people do not appear to be engaged in claims-making (or to be talking moral stances) and that "some" social worlds do not appear to harbour "recognizable" social problems talk.* (p. 97)

Miller (2003) states that we ought to recognize gossip, rapping, or comedy as different forms of claims-making used by marginalized populations to make claims in a social context where these groups lack power and capital to legitimate their claims.

In this paper, following Miller's suggestion, I analyze the interviews I conducted with teenage mothers as claims-making activity. Although the voices of teen mothers are largely excluded from the public discourse about teen pregnancy, during my personal conversations with them, young mothers clearly resisted the views of teen pregnancy, widely present in the media. In this paper I treat the claims made by young women about their journey to motherhood as the claims made in response to the dominant discourses on teen pregnancy. Analyzing young women's narratives as claims-making activity proves to be useful for a number of reasons. First, it allows recognizing young mothers as legitimate players in the claims-making game. When young women's narratives are redefined as claims, their voices are politicized and this has a potential to empower this marginalized group of mothers. Secondly, the claims-making activity of young mothers is not limited to verbal disagreements. It also influences the way young mothers construct their selves and present themselves to others. Therefore, this type of claims-making activity can be regarded as an enactment where the claims are resisted not only through talk but also through the presentation of self and the daily mothering and caring activities of young mothers. Finally, this analysis expands our knowledge of claims-making practices used by marginalized social groups and call for further examination of different styles and types of marginalized claims-making activity.

To situate my arguments in the context of social attitudes towards teen pregnancy, in the next section, I provide a brief summary of the academic, policy and media discourses on teen pregnancy. I demonstrate that, although these discourses make different and often contradictory claims, they all share in common the fact that they are frequently heard in public and reflected in media coverage of teen pregnancy. The following review of the literature examining teen pregnancy vividly demonstrates the marginalization of young mothers and their status as "troubled subjects" of analytical inquiry and political action.

Constructing teen pregnancy as a social problem

In the scholarly and policy literature, teen pregnancy is presented as intrinsically problematic. Among the various claims made about young motherhood it is possible to identify three major ways in which teen pregnancy is constructed as a social problem: (1) the issue of the welfare of young mothers and their children, (2) the issue of the health of both, the

teen mother and her child, and (3) the discourse on the morality of teen motherhood. In what follows, I briefly summarize the major claims that characterize each of these discourses.

Teen pregnancy and welfare

It is widely recognized that the vast majority of teen mothers come from low-income families without steady income or other means of support (Musick 1993; Furstenberg 2003; Coleman and Cater 2006). Young mothers are often represented as in need of the state assistance (Davies 1994; Bissell 2000). The lack of sufficient financial support provided to teen mothers and their children has led some people to argue that, ironically, the shotgun weddings, which were practiced in the past, better served young mothers than the system that replaced such weddings since marriage, even forced marriage, at least provided women with the financial support of the men who fathered their children (Byfield 1999).

Arguably, the concern of the state with teen pregnancy reflects a desire to reduce the costs associated with supporting teen mothers and their children (Bissell 2000; Bonell 2004). According to Bonnel (2004), this theme is especially prevalent in the United States. To lower the costs associated with supporting teen mothers and their children, some states had been considering legislative strategies, such as charging men who engage in sexual relationship with teenage girls with statutory rape or finding ways to enforce the payment of child support to young mothers (Mitchell 1998). Currently, prevention campaigns have become a common practice used by the state to reduce the rates of teen pregnancy (Hacker et al. 2000; George 2005).

Often forgetting about the disadvantaged socio-economic background of the young mothers, states are also concerned with the poor future prospects for teen parents' future. Teen mothers are seen as less likely to finish high school and to gain employment later in their lives. Furthermore, since a child's level of education is strongly correlated with the mother's education, teen pregnancy is often perceived as leading to a circle of poverty which can only be broken by drastically reducing teen pregnancy rates (Bonell 2004).

Although many scholars and policy makers challenge the assumption that teen pregnancy leads to poor educational attainment for young mothers and a high likelihood of poverty among teen mothers and their children, some researchers claim that the relationship between teen pregnancy and socio-economic status is reversed – once pregnant, teenage girls from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to give birth to their children and keep them (Woodward, Fergusson and Horwood 2001; Turner 2004). Coming from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, pregnant or not, young women have limited possibilities to receive suitable education and respectable employment. In fact, some researchers find that the journey to motherhood leads young mothers to continue their education (SmithBattle 2007). Scholars also suggest that on many occasions, it is the poor statistical design of the studies investigating teen pregnancy that links teen pregnancy with poor future outcomes of young parents and their children (Furstenberg 2003). For example, a longitudinal study conducted in Baltimore, which followed teenage mothers and then their children from birth through their teen and mid twenties, found that close to three quarters of mothers were able to gain some employment (only one quarter reached middle class jobs), and only one fifth had three or more children. Among the cohort of children born to teen mothers, close to 80% of daughters and 60% of sons did complete their high school education (Furstenberg 2003).

Despite the findings presented above, one of the central problems linked to teen pregnancy is the problem of welfare and poor future prospects for young mothers and their children. Whether it is pregnancy that causes poverty, or poverty that leads to pregnancy, teen mothers are seen as being limited in their opportunities to pursue education and to gain employment in their future lives (Unger, Molina and Teran 2000). Teen mothers are constructed as placing a burden on the welfare state, making teen pregnancy a problem not just for young mothers and their children but for society as a whole. When pregnancy is blamed for poverty, policy makers focus on educational campaigns and prevention (Hacker et al. 2000; George 2005). Alternatively, those arguing that poverty leads to pregnancy suggest changes in the social structure and an increase in support services available to teen mothers and their children (Duncan 2007).

Teen pregnancy and health

Another set of claims in the literature revolves around the theme of health outcomes of teen pregnancy for women and their children. Emanating mainly from the studies of health professionals who work with teen mothers, this literature argues strongly against teen pregnancy because of the large number of health complications for both mother and child (Lancaster and Hamburg 1986). Some of the consequences listed by health care professionals as negative outcomes of teen pregnancy are direct health outcomes (for example, low birth weight), indirect health outcomes (for example, poor social conditions in which the infants are raised), and lack of responsiveness on the part of young mothers to medical advice (for example, drug use, lack of prenatal care).

The medical complications of teen pregnancy are usually connected with a higher incidence of illness and death. Teen pregnancy is associated with low birth weight (Ashdown-Lambert 2005; Mahavarkar, Madhu and Mule 2008). Other medical complications that are listed as risk factors of teen pregnancy include placenta previa, pregnancy-induced hypertension, anemia and more (Vorvick and Storck 2009). The lack of access to prenatal care also makes it more difficult to diagnose young women's health problems in a timely fashion and to treat them. Since teen pregnancy is associated with multiple risk factors posing danger to the mother and her child, when young mothers are not following through the prenatal care (due to lack of access to such care or unwillingness), the negative health outcomes further exacerbate (Richardson 1999; Haeri, Guichard and Saddlemire 2009).

Although many scholars refrain from directly linking health risks of teen pregnancy to the "deviant" behaviors of young mothers, the statistics provided in the articles often indirectly connect teen pregnancy to "irresponsible" behaviors, which increase the possibility of health complications. For example, many studies inquire into the correlations and associations between teen pregnancy and drug use, smoking, and malnutrition (Mensch and Kandel 1992; Richardson 1999; Bottomley and Lancaster 2008). Considering various health care issues associated with teen pregnancy, health professionals refer to poor social and living conditions that are related to poor health outcomes for the mother and

her child, such as violence (Berenson, San Miguel and Wilkinson 1992), stress and poor psychological wellbeing of the expectant mothers (Modrcin-Talbott et al. 1998; Bottomley and Lancaster 2008). To solve the problem of teenage pregnancy, health care professionals offer different solutions ranging from preventive education to psychological counseling and the promotion of adequate maternal care (Richardson 1999; Fisher and Owen 2008). Ultimately, however, teen pregnancy is perceived as problematic and in need of close and consistent monitoring by health professionals.

Teen pregnancy and morality

While health care professionals and policy makers focus their discussions on the many negative effects of teenage pregnancy on young mothers and their offspring, implicit in many of their claims are assumptions about the worthiness of teenage girls as mothers and the moral aspects of teen pregnancy. In middle-class, western society, pregnancy has become a rite of passage, a change in social status for women (Balin 1988; Warren and Brewis 2004). Through both formal and informal means, images of the normative, socially acceptable motherhood are projected (Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Brooks-Gardner 2003). In addition to the pregnancy-appropriate age (not too young and not too old) it is common to applaud women who postpone parenting until they have completed their education. The point in their career at which women feel free to devote themselves to motherhood is regarded as a sign of readiness to have a child (Gregory 2007). Although, in the past decade, single motherhood has become increasingly more socially accepted, generally, women are still expected to be involved in a meaningful, heterosexual relationship before they get pregnant. Women are also expected to prepare themselves emotionally (by reading and learning about being a mother) and physically (by starting a healthy diet regimen and steady vitamin intake) for the motherhood and to be ready to demonstrate their "mothering skills" through prenatal nurturing, attachment to the baby, and learning self-sacrifice – characteristics that are closely associated in our society with ideal motherhood (Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Bailey 2001; Brooks-Gardner 2003; Copelton 2007). Finally, pregnancy is usually constructed as a highly desirable, planned event, rather than an unfortunate accident.

Pregnant teens deviate from this model of motherhood. Usually, they come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Turner 2004; Lane et al. 2008). Unlike middle-class mothers, teen mothers do not wait to finish school or start a career. Pregnancy among teenagers is presented as an accident, which is the result of immoral behavior (that is, drug or alcohol use) (Mensch and Kandel 1992; Richardson 1999; Cannon and Kleiner 2000). When teens opt to continue their pregnancies and defend their decision as a consciously made choice, their claims are constructed as a response of psychologically unstable young girls with low self-esteem who get pregnant for all the "wrong" reasons (Musick 1993; Werkermann 1994).

To summarize, the scientific and policy literature defines teen pregnancy as a social problem that carries with it a variety of social and health disadvantages for the mothers and their children. As is usually the case with marginalized populations, rarely is the perspective of teen mothers themselves taken into account (but see Kirkman et al. 2001; Turner 2004; Duncan 2007). In this paper I aim to let the voices of teenage mothers be heard. Analyzing interviews with my respondents, I consider their stories as claims-making activity, and examine their narratives as responses to the dominant representations of teen pregnancy in the media. I also consider the decisions women make in regards to their pregnancy, parenting and future as at least partially a response to the stereotypes about teen pregnancy widely present in our culture.

Methodology[1]

This paper is based on the qualitative analysis of individual, semi-structured interviews with 11 young mothers and text analysis of popular newspaper and magazine articles featuring teen pregnancy and available to readers in Canada that were published between the years 1995-2009. The interviews with 11 teen mothers were conducted during November 2008 when I interviewed 42 women of diverse socio-economic statuses and age groups to explore the experiences of pregnant embodiment. At the time of the interview all participants were either pregnant or had given birth to a child in the past 12 months.

Eleven young women who agreed to participate in my study were attending school at a residential facility for young mothers. This facility is a state-funded institution that provides young mothers with shelter, food, and babysitting services. The mothers can choose to live in this facility or to simply attend classes. The babysitting center is located in the same building. Young mothers are allowed to choose among the offered classes in order to gain credits for the completion of their high school diploma.

In the province of Ontario, a number of similar initiatives exist in different cities. While the availability of residential and educational facilities for young mothers varies significantly by geographic area since more urbanized settings usually have a larger number and a larger demand for this type of program, all teenage parents who did not reach the age of 18 and who qualify for social assistance (determined by their level of income), are also required to enroll in LEAP (Learning, Earning, and Parenting) program.[2] This program includes the opportunities to complete missing high school classes in order to receive a grade 12 diploma, to participate in the initiatives designed to prepare young people for the world of work, and to learn parenting skills and practices. Each teen in the LEAP program is assigned to a caseworker who should monitor participation in the program. The financial support with childcare, transportation, and school supplies are also available to young mothers (Ontario Works 2011).

I got access to this facility located in Ontario and I had an opportunity to meet with young mothers and to tell them about my research. Eleven girls agreed to participate in my study. We conducted the interviews in the educational facility for young mothers during day hours. Most of the interviews lasted for approximately one hour, interrupted occasionally by a breastfeeding break. With the permission of young women, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

I intentionally set out to recruit women from diverse cultural and social backgrounds to talk about their embodied experiences of pregnancy. The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 19 years old. When I asked young mothers to state their ethnicity, the majority identified themselves as "white," two as

[1] This study was approved by McMaster Ethics Review Board. The funding for this study was provided by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

[2] Young parents between the ages 18-21 can participate in the program voluntarily.

Native, and one as Muslim. One of the girls was a recent immigrant to Canada (within five years). Only three girls were pregnant at the time of the interview; the rest had given birth to their first child. All but one had been receiving support from their families. All were working toward completion of their high school diploma. Some of the young mothers self-identified themselves as belonging to middle class, but all of them were receiving social assistance, which is usually provided to the lowest income group.[3]

My interest in pregnancy concerned the process of embodiment. Recruiting women from different social backgrounds and age groups, I wanted to understand the impact of social context on the experience of pregnant embodiment. We had long conversations about the effect of pregnancy on women's lives, the process of becoming a mother, and the reactions of others to pregnancy. While the majority of the 42 women who participated in my study spoke about positive feedback that they received from their family, friends, and community, the eleven teen mothers were significantly different in this regard. Rarely did their stories revolve around happy gatherings of their extended family to celebrate their pregnancy, ongoing support of friends, or a caring and supporting community. Although often supported by their immediate family members and partners, these young women emphasized stigmatization and recounted strategies that they used to cope with the stigma of being an "unworthy mother" in their interactions with the larger community. Listening to the negative remarks of total strangers on the bus, young mothers preferred to ignore the comments and remained silent. During the interviews, however, they shared with me their frustration with the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy. They challenged the assumption that teen pregnancy is a negative phenomenon. This paper focuses on the girls' ways of understanding themselves and their situation. Framing their statements about teen pregnancy as claims-making activity, I demonstrate how the young women deconstructed "the social problem of teen pregnancy" and sought to normalize their journey to motherhood.

[3] When asked about their reason to identify as belonging to the middle class group, these girls referred to their mothers' education and the level of income.

To situate young women's claims in the context of media discourse on teen pregnancy, I incorporated into the analysis newspapers' and magazines' articles on teen pregnancy. Collecting data through the Canadian Periodicals Index database, I found over 100 articles related to teen pregnancy, which were featured between the years 1995 and 2009. I also collected 127 articles through the LexisNexis search of Canadian newspapers between the years 2000-2009. It should be pointed out that the rates of teen pregnancy in Canada continue to drop. In their recent study of trends in teen pregnancy McKay and Barrett (2010) estimate that between 1996-2006, teen pregnancy in Canada declined by 36.9%. In 2006, teen birth rates in Canada were 13.7%, significantly lower than in England/Wales or the United States where teen birth rates stood at 35% and 41.9% respectively (McKay and Barrett 2010).

While the overall decline of teen pregnancy rates had been noticed by academics, these findings are not immediately visible in public media. The vast majority of the newspaper articles continue to present teen pregnancy as an alarming social problem. Although the collected articles come from different media sources and identify teen pregnancy as a social problem for different reasons, in this paper, I draw on this data to identify the dominant view. I suggest that since claims-making activity is generally done in public/in media, it can be regarded as a dominant discourse while the quiet voices of young mothers are heard only during individual interviews. In what follows, I show how the media frames claims about the problem of teen pregnancy and how young mothers deconstruct those claims.

Findings

Media – constructing teen pregnancy as a social problem

Mirroring representations of pregnancy in the academic literature and among policy-makers, the media portrays teen pregnancy as a social problem connected to the welfare of young mothers and their children, the health risks associated with teen pregnancy, and general unpreparedness of young mothers to bear their own children.

Usually, teen pregnancy is represented in the media as a consequence of irresponsible behavior on the part of teen moms. In many cases, teen pregnancy is seen as the result of unprotected sex, with girls irresponsibly engaging in sexual relations with their partners naively hoping they will not become pregnant. Occasionally, teen pregnancy is constructed as the result of counting on the assurance of partners that condoms will be used when this is not the case and irresponsible behavior in using birth control (forgetting to take a pill):

> Lynette Doyle, 16, started dating a family friend named Jeff. He was so sweet and attentive – Lynette fell in love with him right away… Lynette and Jeff were making out on his bed while his parents weren't home when she decided she was ready to have sex. She told Jeff and they began kissing again, but suddenly Lynette pulled away. "Wait – I don't know how to use a condom," she said. "Don't worry, I've got it taken care of," Jeff replied. And she totally trusted him… In August 2005, about a year after she started sleeping with Jeff, Lynette's period didn't come… (Dahl 2006:149)

As a result, young pregnant women are portrayed as overly naive (and therefore childish) or irresponsible (and therefore not ready to be a mother).

Teen pregnancy is routinely discussed in articles that talk about drugs, violence and other behaviors that are deemed as anti-social in our society. The headlines of the articles featuring teen pregnancy proclaim that *Bullying, sex, and drugs are key issues for local teens* (in Hamilton Spectator 2001). Teen pregnancy is discussed in articles with such headlines as *Dark side of girl power* (Monsebraaten 2006), *Party animals: Jan Wong examines the bizarre ritual that now passes for a celebration among better-off young teens. Its key features: too much alcohol, too little parental scrutiny and far, far too many uninvited strangers bent on wanton destruction* (Wong 2003), *In teenage wasteland, the rent just went up; Graduation, cottage weekends, parents on vacation – summer's here and, for many adolescents, it's party time. But, with tough new rulings coming from courts in the U.S. and Canada on liability for everything from drunk driving to teen pregnancy* (Anderssen 2002), and *Wild World of Teen Sex* (Gibson 2006).

Teen pregnancy is also linked to the irresponsible behavior of youngsters. The headlines suggest that *Teens reveal ignorance about HIV* (Branswell 2003) and that *Condom message not getting through to young people* (in The Daily Herald Tribune 2005). More often than not, pregnancy among youngsters is represented as the result of childish behavior and

a sex life for which teens are not ready either physically or mentally. *When children have children: teens who become parents are in for the shock of their lives* – suggests the headline in Reader's Digest (Schuyler 1999). Some reporters suggest that teen pregnancy has become perceived by teenagers as "cool" due to positive media coverage of young pregnant celebrities (Newsweek; Maclean's; The Toronto Star).

When pregnancy is the conscious choice of a young woman, often it is framed as a misguided decision made by someone lacking in maturity. The article *She got pregnant on purpose*, featured in "Seventeen" (Rue 2005), is a common example of the narrative about teen pregnancy often presented in the media. The article described the life of a 15-year old girl Sheena, who, coming from a broken family (no father, mother is a drug addict in jail), decided to get pregnant because she wanted to feel loved (by a child). Despite her grandmother's many warnings, she decides to become pregnant. The story enumerates the negative consequences of Sheena's decision:

> [o]n February 13, 2005, Sheena, then 16, gave birth to a baby boy… She admits that having a baby is a lot tougher than she ever expected…she had no idea how much diapers and clothes cost. Joseph [her partner] now works at a golf course, but he makes only $7 an hour – not enough to support them. And as her grandmother feared, Sheena had to drop out of school to care for her son…so now she has little hope of getting a well-paying job someday. She and Joseph survive by moving between her sister and friends' homes, and relying on them for food. Sheena knows that moving around so much when she was a child wasn't good for her – but she's already been forced to start the same cycle with Dakota… Sheena's not alone: A lot of her friends and young relatives are moms too. "Sometimes I think we were just put on this earth to have kids," she explains. And that's how many teens who intentionally get pregnant feel – like it's the only way to fulfill their potential. But that usually ends up backfiring: "I just didn't realize how hard it was going to be until after I had him," Sheena says. "I don't get anything – all our money goes to the baby." And that means making a stable home for her family remains a far-off dream… (Rue 2005:152)

There is a clear moral tone to the author's account of Sheena's decision to get pregnant and have a child. Despite the fact that for many women a journey to motherhood is a difficult transition which often exceeds their preconceived notions of what it would be like to have a child (Fox 2009), in this article the difficulties faced by Sheena and her partner are framed as a direct result of her pregnancy at a young age. So too is Joseph's unskilled labor, which is described as hardly sufficient to support a new family. The author assumes that by staying at school Sheena would be able to get a "well-paying job" disregarding the fact that prior to becoming pregnant Sheena was busy babysitting her nephew and (thus) had little time for her studies or for extracurricular activities. The readers are left to conclude that Sheena's pregnancy, rather than the other unfortunate circumstances, is responsible for the life of poverty she is destined to live.

To summarize, teen mothers are portrayed in media as immature, irresponsible and naive. Their pregnancy is constructed as either a mistake or a choice that is made unwisely. Although occasionally newspapers and magazines feature positive stories about teen pregnancy (Miller 2000), the majority of claimsmakers whose voices are presented in the media, regard teen pregnancy as a situation that creates a problem for mothers, children and the larger community in which they live.

The media images of teen pregnancy have direct consequences on the young mothers' experiences of pregnancy and motherhood. The dominant discourse on teen pregnancy frames a social context in which young women construct their mothering identity and negotiate their status as mothers. In many social interactions with strangers (school staff, friends, and family members) young women were perceived as unworthy of motherhood even prior to their ability to demonstrate otherwise. The stigma attached to teen pregnancy and teen mothering required acquisition of additional practices and behaviors that would allow young mothers to successfully construct their mothering selves and to deal with the stigma attached to teen mothering. In the following section of the paper I draw on young mother narratives to demonstrate how they negotiate their status as mothers and how they respond to the stigma of being a teenage mother.

Teenage mothers – deconstructing teen pregnancy as a social problem

Talking about their experiences of pregnancy, young mothers often directly and indirectly challenged the common assumptions surrounding teen pregnancy in the media. The public visibility of pregnancy and constant social control exercised by society over pregnant women (Brooks-Gardner 2003; Upton and Han 2003), made young mothers vulnerable participants in many social interactions in which their bodies were stigmatized by those around them and their mothering skills and qualities were questioned by friends, adults, and even complete strangers. Therefore, while young mothers may or may not have read the particular newspapers and magazines that I used in my analysis, they were well aware of the many negative connotations associated with teen pregnancy in our culture. Being visibly pregnant in public places, attending school, or participating in social events emphasized to them time after time the deviant status of their pregnancy. The young women talked about the negative remarks they would routinely hear while riding a bus and the questions they were asked about their behavior and parenting plans. Mostly coming from complete strangers, those remarks and questions were constant reminders to them that their pregnant bodies symbolized their deviation from the norm and acted as a sign of irresponsibility, immaturity and stigma.

The young women who participated in my study rarely challenged openly the negative comments of strangers regarding their pregnancy. Instead, many remained silent, ignoring the interest of others in their pregnancy and minimizing verbal interaction with those who were critical. Through the interviews, however, young mothers were clear in presenting their silence as a "strategy" for coping with explicit or implicit criticisms of others. This silence can also be understood as symbolic silence – being unable to speak up and protest the dominant discourse due to young age, marginalized social status, and stigmatized (for example, young and pregnant) body. Once the young women were provided with an opportunity to be heard, during the interviews, they were quick to present counter-arguments and defend their decision to have a child. For many of them, the interview gave them their first opportunity to offer their point of view on the issue. Starting with short, straight-to-the-point answers, most young mothers "opened up" during the interview, becoming increasingly animated as they described their experiences of stigmatization. In what follows, I summarize young mothers' accounts around three major themes that emerged during the analysis (1) accepting responsibility

as a mother; (2) receiving support from others; and (3) questioning the stigma attached to teen pregnancy.

Accepting responsibility

All of the young respondents in my study were dealing with unplanned pregnancies. Some of them claimed that they got pregnant while using birth control; others described their pregnancies as an accident. Once pregnancy was confirmed, however, the young mothers typically accepted their circumstances and often joyfully focused on readying themselves to take on the new responsibility:

> For me, it was unexpected; and, for me, it was a surprise. Women choose to get pregnant when they are ready…. For me, it was a big surprise and it made me feel good, and it was a very good surprise and that is why I want to keep the baby… It made me… decide that I need something in my life. I don't have a family and the baby will be my family… I like everything about being pregnant. (Rebecca)

While Rebecca acknowledges that in our society pregnancy is a "chosen" and planned event that women postpone until they are emotionally ready to commit to a child, her unplanned pregnancy becomes defined as "good surprise." Rebecca was concerned that she would not have children because many women in her family had a history of fertility problems. She reacted positively to the news of her pregnancy because it confirmed that she was capable of carrying a child. Since in our society childless women often face social disapproval, constructing her pregnancy as a "pleasant surprise," Rebecca places her ability to get pregnant as being ultimately more important than the timing of her pregnancy – it is better to be a young mother than not to be a mother at all. Rebecca was the only one who was not in contact with her family. Coming from a traditional family steeped in patriarchal culture in which women are often denied the authority to make their own decisions, Rebecca's pregnancy allowed her to feel empowered. The pregnancy gave her strength and a reason to break ties with her family members. For Rebecca, pregnancy represented a chance for a different life, one which would allow her to be the kind of woman she aspires to be.

Despite the unplanned nature, the pregnancies for these young women were experienced not as regrettable mistakes but rather as blessings or at least as a situation that gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their maturity and ability to take on adult responsibilities. Being pregnant signified the beginning of an adult life. They were eager to show that they are able to safeguard the wellbeing of their children. In her comparative analysis of the transition to motherhood among women coming from different socio-economic backgrounds, Martha McMahon (1995) noted that the notion of responsibility is often associated with the transition to motherhood but seen differently by women of different classes. While more affluent women associate responsible motherhood with acquiring skills, achieving financial stability and preparing emotionally prior to getting pregnant, women from more economically disadvantaged backgrounds tend to perceive the transition to motherhood as the route towards achieving responsibility. For young mothers in this study, however, the emphasis on behaving responsibly during pregnancy was exacerbated by the fact that pregnancy signaled the transition from adolescence to adulthood, the time when people are required to make their own, informed decisions. The theme of being responsible, therefore, was central to the narratives of young women's journeys to motherhood.

The effort to display responsibility began in earnest as soon as the young women realized they were pregnant. The girls attended to their diets and focused on eating healthier foods. They began to take vitamins. The majority sought out prenatal care and prenatal classes. While they may not have made the choice to get pregnant, they did make the decision to take their pregnancies seriously and to devote themselves to the best interests of their unborn children as a way of demonstrating their capacity to be good mothers:

> I only ate healthy because of the baby. I knew I had to keep the baby healthy and for that I had to eat healthy. Before, I used to smoke and eat greasy foods to get more weight. And I quit right after I found out that I am pregnant. After I stopped and started to be very healthy, I was so proud of myself because I didn't know that I could do that and that it is possible until I actually did. (Kimberly)

Young mothers talked about their decisions to sacrifice previous life styles (going out and partying, smoking) and making "good choices" (eating healthy, learning about pregnancy, watching their health). They dedicated themselves to learning the work of mothering. Consistent with the ideology of the intensive mothering (Hays 1998), a dominant view of mothering in our society, which holds women responsible for investing as much as they can in the physical and emotional development of the child, young women perceived their path to mothering as paved out of numerous sacrifices that they made during pregnancy to ensure the wellbeing of their child. Following this set of norms, however, they demonstrated to themselves and to others that despite the stigma attached to teen mothering, they could indeed provide their children with safe and nurturing environments. All of the young women reported receiving prenatal care during pregnancy and making every effort to ensure that they followed the advice of their maternity care providers and other adults who supported them during pregnancy. The transition to motherhood, therefore, was often portrayed as the active work of becoming a good mother, supported by their families, teachers, and other close people around them.

Receiving Support

A problem raised consistently in the media and in the literature on teen pregnancy is the limited support available to young mothers from either their families or partners (Shaw and Lawlor 2007; Smith-Battle 2007). The lack of support, the literature suggested, contributes to lack of educational attainment among young mothers, poor health outcomes for mothers and their children and the lack of financial means to support the families (Shaw and Lawlor 2007; SmithBattle 2007; Paranjothy et al. 2009).

In contrast, the young mothers who participated in this study talked a great deal about the support they received from their families. All of the young women but one maintained close relationships with their families and received assistance from their mothers, sisters and other family members. Although in many cases, the news of a pregnancy was not taken well initially, the families involved eventually became a source of support and assistance for the young mothers and their children. Even more interestingly, all of the girls had the support of their partners. The boyfriends were constructed as thoughtful, kind men, who admired and respected the young mothers, loved their preg-

nant and postpartum bodies and found joy and happiness in their new status as fathers. Sam's boyfriend, for instance, encouraged and assisted her in maintaining a healthy diet through her pregnancy. Monika's boyfriend was extremely excited about her pregnancy and frequently praised her changing body. The relationships between young mothers and their partners were portrayed as supportive, loving, and stable:

> I would talk to my boyfriend, if I was really upset about anything, I would always talk to him. And he liked it to be pregnant and he supported it and he is a really nice guy. (Vicky)

Like Vicky, many of the young mothers used "us" and "we" to describe the involvement of their partners in pregnancy and the transition to motherhood. The partners figured prominently their narratives as supportive and active participants in the young women's journeys to motherhood. Since at the time of the interviews, most young mothers had already given birth, they were able to tell stories about the ongoing nature of the relationships – meaningful before pregnancy, supportive during pregnancy, and continuing through the postpartum period. Overall, the relationship with partners in the narratives of young mothers was constructed as close and supportive. Most of the young mothers continued to reside, during pregnancy and after giving birth, with their own families or their boyfriends' families. Though most partners were not described as providing financially for the young mothers, they did provide emotional support, love, and care.

While mothering in our society is often associated with "natural" instincts of women and constructed as a biological need of a woman, the biology of fathering is linked to the need to procreate. Fathers are assumed to be less emotionally attached to their children and less invested in securing a safe and nurturing environment for an offspring. The fathers of the children born from teenage mothers are usually portrayed as immature boys who are not capable to take financial and emotional responsibility for raising a child or as older, abusive men who take advantage of naive young women and later disappear from paternal responsibility (Byfield 1999). Presenting their partners as caring and supportive, the young women constructed their relationship as the one that forms a "family" in which the boyfriend does not provide financial assistance but does take on all other roles essential for meaningful relationships.

While partners certainly had a persistent presence in the girls' narratives, it was their mothers and other female relatives who provided physical and practical care for them during pregnancy. The mothers accompanied the young women to prenatal appointments, shopped for maternity clothes and baby essentials, provided support, and, most importantly, accepted the young mothers as valued members of their families. Disclosing the news about their pregnancies to their mothers was always fraught, emotional and dramatic, but after the initial tumult, the young women told stories of acceptance and the building of strong bonds with their families:

> First, my body started changing, but I didn't know. I think that I started getting sick and then my belly got a little bit bigger and my mom noticed it. So then she told me to go and do the test and I did and it came back positive and my mom started crying and I didn't know what to do because I was in shock and she came over to me and she gave me a hug and I started to cry my eyes out… At first my mom didn't really like it because I was so young and then she was kind of happy and she said "Oh, I am going to be a grandma!" (Lindsey)

Lindsey's mother, like many other mothers, ultimately accepted the pregnancy and played a key role in supporting her daughter throughout the transition to motherhood. Fathers, on the other hand, were discussed differently. In the few narratives where fathers were present, they would usually be pictured as distancing themselves from their pregnant daughters, feeling uneasy or embarrassed about the daughters' pregnancies. Once the baby was born, however, the fathers would be more accepting and take on an active role of a grandparent.

While the circumstances of pregnancy for the young girls participating in this study were different, most described supportive immediate families and partners. More than half of the young women did not have fathers present in their lives; and, in discussing their families, they would focus on the support of women from their close kin (for example, mother, aunt, grandmother, sister), whom they regard as their families.

In our society, the ideal of a nuclear family, consisting of the two adults of the opposite gender and their biological children, is often taken as a "norm," leaving other families, which do not fit this structure, to be perceived as less successful (Fox 2009). While many feminist scholars claim that family should be understood as a set of relationships between members who contribute to its existence, rather than a unit where each member has a specific function to perform (Fox 2009), the cultural belief in a nuclear family as the best environment for raising children remains strong. Therefore, gay families, childless families, or lone parents often feel that their families are less socially valued, if not stigmatized, in our society (Fox 2009).

Emphasizing the active role of their male partners in pregnancy and raising a child, the young women sought to establish the resemblance with the "normal" nuclear family. Formal marriage aside, their relationships were often constructed as a deep romantic bond on which the nuclear family is supposed to be built. In contrast with the traditional nuclear family, which is constructed around the family type of a middle-class family where the father assumes the role of breadwinner and the mother is responsible for emotional care, however, it was the mothers and other relatives who provided for young women financially and offered a place to stay.

The physical and emotional support available to young women during pregnancy and in postpartum made it difficult to see themselves as single mothers. They experienced their pregnancies as occurring in the context of loving, caring and supportive families as eager and as happy as they were to welcome a new child to the midst.

Challenging the construction of teen pregnancy as a problem

While the definition of teen pregnancy as a social problem is a taken for granted assumption in most circles and certainly among a majority of academics and policyholders, it is a definition that the young women in this study rejected. They especially rejected the view of teen mothers as deviants:

> People just look down on you because you are a teenager and you should be in school and have a life. But, you can also have a life when you are with a baby. I am almost done [with] school and I am going to college and I am having a life, a better life and I also am having my child. (Jennifer)

In the quote above, Jennifer challenges the assumption made almost mechanically that pregnancy necessarily curtails the opportunity to complete high

school. In a society where the timing of childbearing is linked to financial stability, career achievement and job security (Ranson 2009), teen mothers are seen as "unprepared" for mothering not only in terms of their maturity level but also due to their presumed inability to combine childrearing with full-time education or work. Intentionally or unintentionally linking childrearing to heterosexual, middle-class families where the husband becomes a sole provider and a mother can take time off work to fully care for the child, yet have financial support from her husband, many policy-makers and scholars argue that young parenthood denies mothers the opportunity to gain meaningful employment in the future (Pogarsky, Thornberry and Lizotte 2006). While these assumptions are occasionally challenged in the academic literature (Bissell 2000; Duncan 2007), the most common images of teen mothers represent young women unable to study or work and (on many occasions) deeply regretful for having a child at an early age. This is the image that Jennifer challenges by presenting herself as successfully managing both motherhood and education. Not only does she not regret having a child but she defines herself as "having a better life" despite the fact that she is a young mother.

Jennifer was not unique in her educational aspirations. All of the girls who participated in my study attended school at a residential facility and all of them were planning on finishing their education. Since the financial assistance provided to parents under the age of 18 in Ontario is conditioned by participation in the LEAP program, the young mothers receiving this type of welfare support do have an opportunity to attend school and finish their high school education while having a child. While the ability to attend this school was, no doubt, critical to their educational goals, none of the young women attributed their educational motivation to the ability to attend this school. Rather, they emphasized their own agency and saw themselves as making individual life choices and decisions. They claimed that mothering a child at a young age did not close off opportunities in their lives. They often used their own mothers as examples. They pictured their mothers as strong, independent women, who despite difficulties in their lives and the responsibilities of raising their own children achieved success. For example, Vicky was proud that her mother managed to finish teaching college while at the same time being a single parent and taking care of Vicky and her little sister. Rachel looked up to her mother who, despite the fact that she had 13 children to raise, was always kind and loving. Asked directly about a role model in their lives, more than half of the young mothers named their own mothers. Mothers, therefore, though often upset at the initial news about their daughters' pregnancies, served as living proof that pregnancy and motherhood did not spell the end to all of one's educational and/or career goals.

In addition to challenging the common stereotypes of the uneducated and depressed young mother, teen mothers also challenged the very bases for making a distinction between "young" and "not young" mothers. Questioning the importance of biological age in determining women's readiness to mother, Susan commented:

> I don't think that there is a difference between teens and other women and I think it just depends on how mature you are. Because I just had a baby at 18 and I am really mature and there can be a 30 years old who likes to go out and party and she drinks a lot and does drugs and she might have a baby and somebody [people] would look at her and they might not know her lifestyle and they would say, well she is 30, she is having a baby, and you are only 18. (Susan)

For Susan, age is not a good indicator of a woman's "suitability" to mother a child. She claims that the characterization of mothers as good or bad has much more to do with the individual decisions women make. Presenting themselves as mature and "true" mothers, many young women challenged the importance of biological age in determining the "right" time to become pregnant. Considering that the "ideal motherhood" is associated in our culture with a specific set of behaviors (ready for sacrifice, nurturing, caring, responsible) (Glenn 1994), the young mothers challenged age group as being a necessary component in the equation of the good motherhood.

The dominant discourse on motherhood, which situates childrearing in the context of nuclear family, was used by others to deny a respectable social status to young mothers. Notably, young women used the very same discourse to claim their suitability to mother and exhibiting the set of behaviors that highlight the ultimate mothering – sacrifice of personal needs for the wellbeing of the baby, the clear sense of responsibility for the child, and the creation of a nurturing and loving family. Moreover, precisely because young mothers were often perceived as unable to be good mothers, the ability to conform to the norms of ideal mothering was seen as an empowering and liberating experience by the girls.

To summarize, the narratives of these young women about their journeys to motherhood portray responsible, caring, and nurturing mothers who, despite unanticipated pregnancy, managed to continue living their lives, raising their children, and look forward to building their future career. In presenting themselves as such, young women often challenged the common assumptions about teen pregnancy, picturing themselves as not very different from the mothers raising their children in heterosexual marriages and belonging to middle-class and (what is considered to be) the appropriate age group. According to my interviewees, being a teen mother, in itself, does not constitute a problem. Although their lives are much harder than those of their childless friends, young mothers do not differ much from the normative motherhood. Similarly to other women, they attend prenatal classes and receive adequate maternity care (when such care is available). Although not legally married, the girls constructed their personal relationship as meaningful and supporting. They continue their education and plan to attend colleges. Therefore, they suggest, it is wrong to define teen pregnancy as a "problem" – it is the set of problematic behaviors and not a specific age group that ought to signify deviant motherhood.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this paper I demonstrated how teen pregnancy is constructed in the media, policy circles, and academic literature as a social problem and how young women challenge dominant discourses by highlighting their similarities to "other mothers" and rejecting the importance of age as a criterion for successful mothering. Teen mothers are typically constructed as young women who did not choose to become pregnant. They are seen as irresponsible and immature, not involved in committed relationships, and lacking in the financial resources and social support necessary to provide for their children. They are also constructed as women who make poor individual choices leading to negative health

outcomes and poor prospects for their own and their children's wellbeing (Musick 1993; Fields 2005; Arai 2009).

Although rarely explicitly stated, the arguments against teen pregnancy are based on the idea that successful mothering requires a specific set of social and economic conditions – being heterosexual and married, and having the means to provide for a child. The ideology of intensive mothering, prevalent in our society, suggests that women ought to invest in their children emotionally and physically (Hays 1998). Since teen mothers typically violate these conditions, it becomes impossible for them to be seen as "good mothers." The "mistake" they make in allowing themselves to become pregnant is seen as paid by society, which has the burden of supporting young mothers financially because of their immature and irresponsible behavior (Woollett 1991; Musick 1993; Thompson et al. 2008). Although sociologists have long challenged the myth of the normative nuclear family (Eichler 1997; Mitchell 2008), most social policies and debates continue to be based around this norm. Any other family formation by definition becomes non-normative, "inappropriate" and less able to create conditions for the successful raising of children. While some traditionally marginalized groups of women, such as older mothers or lesbian mothers, have been able to draw attention to their unique experiences of mothering (Berryman 1991; Chabot and Ames 2004; Gregory 2007; Friese, Becker and Nachtigall 2008; Dunn 2009), the perspective of younger mothers has not been extensively studied (but see Woollett 1991; Bissell 2000; Brubaker and Wright 2006). The fact that teen mothers typically belong to a lower socio-economic class and often are members of visible minority groups, in addition to them being young, contributes to the reality in which they are, for the most part, unnoticed, unheard, and unrecognized (Woollett 1991; Brubaker and Wright 2006).

In my analysis I have treated the narratives of young women I interviewed simultaneously as personal stories and as claims these young women were making in response to the dominant discourse on teen pregnancy as a social problem. Miller (2003) alerts us to the fact that claims-making activity of marginalized populations can take several forms that are not perceived as "legitimate" by dominant groups. Taking up Miller's (2003) argument, this paper presented the narratives of young mothers as claims-making activity. Describing their journey to motherhood, the young women constructed their personal narratives as a response to the dominant discourse, which conceptualizes teen pregnancy as a problem. Indeed, analyzing the interviews with these young mothers, it was hard not to see the correspondence between the themes commonly present in the media and framing teen pregnancy as a social problem and the arguments made by the young mothers in reaction to these claims. Reflecting on their experiences of being pregnant, the young mothers challenged a number of assumptions made about teen girls who become mothers. Although their pregnancies were unplanned, in their narratives they constructed them as life-turning events that brought happiness and joy to their lives. By constructing their pregnancies as a positive experience, they challenged the assumption commonly made in the media that childbearing, regarded by most teen mothers, was a mistake and a burden (Rue 2005).

It should be pointed out that the young women interviewed for this study were all enrolled in a facility that provided teen mothers with the opportunity to study while having childcare available. Although most young mothers lived at home during the time of the interview, a number did use a residential service provided by this facility. All the mothers were taking classes offered to complete their high school diploma. All but one of the young mothers were supported by their families and all of them had supportive partners. Finally, being enrolled in the same school provided young mothers with the possibility to build relationships with other young mothers, a positive experience that was commonly mentioned by these women.

Given the context in which the young women interviewed for this study experienced their pregnancies and motherhood, it is likely that their narratives would be different from the voices of the pregnant teens who are lacking social support, out of the school system, and disinterested or unable to pursue future education. Moreover, it is safe to assume that the majority of the pregnant teens do not have the same level of support that the women interviewed for this study received during their pregnancies and after they had given birth. Given that social support during pregnancy and the postpartum period had been found to be of crucial importance to the positive experiences of mothering (Fox 2009), it can be argued that the enthusiasm with which these young women saw their pregnancy and parenting can be related to the ability to experience transition to motherhood while receiving assistance from significant others – mothers, partners, supportive friends.

Although clearly, the experiences of these young women do not apply to all teen mothers, they demonstrate the diversity of teen mothering. As these women passionately argued, being a young mother should not be equated with being a "bad" mother. Having a child at a young age can be an empowering experience. Being unmarried does not mean being a lonely, single mother. What these girls claimed is that the value attached to mothering should be based on the work of mothering rather than on such criteria as age, level of income, or marital status. Framing this argument as a political claim made by marginalized mothers challenges many ideological assumptions that are made by the dominant community in framing teen pregnancy as a social problem.

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First Graders in a College Sociology Classroom: A Reflection

Abstract Once a year from 1995 until 2008 I offered a sociology class session in which first graders from a local private school joined college undergraduates who were enrolled in my advanced theories course entitled Sociological Studies of Children. The sessions had two goals: to have college students interact with the first graders guided by what we had been learning in class and to introduce first graders to college and to sociology. These joint classes are worthy of further reflection for what they suggest about the potential theoretical, methodological, and practical uses of ideas drawn from the "new sociology of childhood."

This paper is a retrospective description of and reflection on these joint classes. It begins with a presentation of the theoretical background that framed the event. It then details the preparations for the class with the college students; the class itself, including the format and content of lectures and discussions; and the post-visit discussion with the college students. Additional issues described are the influences of the adults (parents) who accompanied the children and some unexpected matters that arose in some of the classes.

The first graders' participation in a college sociology class drew on the ideas of taking children seriously as learners about sociology and recognizing children's expertise about what it is like to be children. Taking seriously children's actions, comments, and concerns in non-judgmental ways provides insights into children's ways, alternative modes of interaction, and new approaches to studying children.

Keywords Ethnomethodology; Phenomenological Sociology; Sociology of Childhood; Sociology of Education; Symbolic Interactionism

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During my academic career, I have studied, written about, and offered courses in what has been termed the "new sociology of childhood" (see Matthews 2007). My work has explored, through theoretical and empirical materials, children's worlds as children themselves view them (see, for example, Waksler 1986; 1991a; 1991b; 1996). In 1995, I began considering the implications of these findings in a college classroom when I invited first graders from a local private school to attend a college class session of an undergraduate advanced theories course entitled Sociological Studies of Children. Joint classes with first graders continued once a year until my retirement in 2008.

Figure 1. Photo Yuko Sato.

In this paper I look back on these joint classes, describing the theoretical perspective that framed them, preparations for the classes, the format and content of lectures and discussions, and insights that emerged. The classes were designed not as research exercises but as ways to let our interactions with the first graders be guided by our course readings and class discussions about children's worlds as children perceive them. In what follows, I describe the classes as they occurred and the theoretical, methodological, and practical issues that flowed from them.

I find these joint classes worthy of reflection and of relevance to qualitative theorists and researchers for what they indicate about the insights that the "new sociology of childhood" can provide – for both the understanding of children's worlds and the possible outcomes of implementing these ideas in real-life situations. Furthermore, those who teach in elementary schools may find it worthwhile to consider such collaboration with local colleges; similarly, those who teach in college – in sociology of childhood, early childhood education, and in other academic areas – may also see the promise of such collaboration and the insights it can provide.

Background of the Classes

My initial invitation to the first graders was offered rather casually: I had visited a first grade class to do

a presentation on greyhound rescue operations and, in passing, mentioned to Ms. Duffy, the teacher, that it might be fun to reciprocate by inviting her class to my college sociology class. Having offered the invitation, on my way home I asked myself: What was I thinking? What can I do? I knew I wanted to do something sociological, but can first graders understand sociology? My own work in the sociology of childhood provided me ample evidence of young children's unrecognized competence, but was I going too far? Is sociology "too hard" for young children or is that simply an assumption that reflects an underestimation of children?

When I told colleagues, primarily developmentalists, of my plans, they assumed that we would play games or that the children would serve us as objects of observation and subjects of study. When I disclosed that my goal was quite different – to give a sociology lecture followed by discussion in which first graders and college students would be full participants – I was met with shocked surprise and, I suspect, some questioning of my knowledge of children, if not my general competence. Nonetheless, I wanted to offer the first graders as "typical" a college class as I could manage – after all, I *had* invited them to *college*. The goal of the class for my students was not to use first graders as objects of observation in any research sense but, drawing on ideas from their course readings, to participate with them in learning about childhood – for children indeed have expertise in being children. The goal for the first graders was to give them a sense of sociology and of what college is like. The yearly event has been routinely described as a highlight by my students and the first graders.

Theoretical framework

My theoretical and empirical work in the sociology of childhood, conducted within a phenomenological sociological perspective, has focused on suspending theoretical and everyday life assumptions about children and turning attention to children's perspectives as they formulate them. Adults' ideas about children's perspectives may differ dramatically from children's perspectives; adults claim that their status *as adults* legitimizes their views, further complicating understanding. Children themselves are fundamentally important resources for grasping children's perspectives and the meaning of their actions. Setting what children can and cannot do, know, understand, think about, and worry about as *empirical* matters broadens and clarifies both theory and research.

The course to which first graders were invited, Sociological Studies of Children, included a variety of readings, primarily sociological but also philosophical and postmodern. Readings varied from year to year. The most recent set of readings included, in this order: Danby (1998), a critique of developmentalism as a model for understanding children and an exploration of a sociological approach termed "talk-in-action;" Cavin (1994), an observational study of a young child's uninstructed use of a camera as a way of exploring a child's perspective; Atkinson (1980), an examination of the everyday use of a developmental model and, implicitly, a critique of that model; Sheets-Johnstone (1996), an analysis of reading babies' bodies for understanding their worlds; Waksler (1996), a study of matters that trouble children and their innovative ways of addressing those troubles; Harris (1998), an examination of the important role of peers in children's lives; selections from R. Stainton Rogers and W. Stainton Rogers (1992), an exploration of the variety and relativity of ways that children are conceptualized; and G. Matthews (1994), an examination of the depth and complexity of children's ideas.

It is against this background that I offered a sociology class to first graders simply to see what such a class would be like.

Preparation

Every November approximately 15 first graders (ages 6-7) joined the 10 to 20 college students enrolled in an advanced theories course, Sociological Studies of Children. The first graders' visit served my students as a way of practicing what they had learned about different ways to think about and interact with children. My students were asked to participate in class as they usually do without children present and discuss their experiences afterwards against the background of the course readings.

I asked my students to treat the first graders as fellow students, not as topics of research. I emphasized that they and the first graders were colleagues jointly participating in a class. I particularly requested that they avoid using what Joyce described as "The Look," which she identified in her observations of people watching babies. She wrote,

> The Look can be impressionistically characterized as a constant, whole-hearted, everlasting smile accompanied by sparkling eyes fixed with fascination upon the child… The Look is very difficult to describe verbally, but I found it immediately recognizable when I saw it. (Joyce 1991:115)

In addition to asking my students not to use The Look, I urged them not to laugh at children when the children were not joking, remember ideas from their course readings, and simply (or, it turns out, not so simply) to treat them as colleagues. My students followed my instructions but emphasized afterwards how difficult it was to do so.

Towards the latter part of class we provided food for our guests, but even this rather straightforward undertaking was guided by the course perspective. In preparing the "menu" I asked that my students bring not "kids' food" but the kinds of food that they themselves would bring to an adult party. [Further details are provided in the next section of this paper.] I made one exception – for me – and brought Jell-O Jigglers cut into the shape of dog bones, which all the students, college and first grade, seem to enjoy, and, oddly, became a tradition.

The first grade teacher prepared the first graders for the visit by talking about what sociology might be. I discussed with her some of the specific topics that might arise and that her students might want to consider beforehand. One such topic was what the children thought was hard for them as children and that they wished they could change. They also discussed what college students might be learning about children. They were aware that the college students in the class wanted to learn about children from children and that they, the first graders, could learn something about what college and college students are like. She encouraged the first graders to participate in the college class as that would be helpful to the class, and in every joint class the children did so enthusiastically and substantively.

When the first graders arrived they went to the college's Resource Center, a child-friendly place, where they could relax after a 45-minute bus ride and eat the lunches that they brought. After

lunch, the Resource Center staff provided them with crayons, paper, and other art supplies. Their enthusiasm for being at college was very evident. One child accosted a college student exiting the bathroom and excitedly asked, "Are you a college student?" From the Resource Center, they moved to a classroom for the sociology class. In the next section, I describe the general format of the class, compiled from reflections on the 13 years that the event took place.

Figure 2. Photo Yuko Sato.

The Class

I arranged the classroom so that my students and the first graders were seated among each other. [Accompanying parents and the first grade teacher, by prior arrangement, were given back-row seats and were not included in the class except as observers.] I wanted both sets of students to participate equally as students. My students listened respectfully to the comments of the first graders and contributed related comments of their own. I designed the content of the lecture and the questions for general discussion so that they would have relevance to my students, as well as the first graders. [After the class some of my students said that they wished I had given this lecture to them on their first day of class because it made very clear what sociology is.]

The lecture, interspersed with general discussion, usually lasted about 45 minutes and the first graders seemed to have no problem with either the time or the format. My students and the first graders listened to my lecture, participated in the general discussion, and were attentive to the comments of one another.

In line with my goal to make the class as typical a college class as possible, I brought lecture notes, as I always do, and referred to them as I lectured.

Figure 3. Photo Yuko Sato.

Sample Lecture Notes

What is sociology?
- Study of people together
  - What they make together (countries, towns, hospitals, schools)
  - What they do together (teach, learn, work, play)
  - What children do when they are together
    - Games
    - Rhymes (including ones you don't tell adults)

Social rules (for example, hand raising)

What we have been studying

Possible topics to address:
- What is hard about being a child?
- What are adults like?
- What kinds of things are scary? What do you do about them?
- What looks do people give children?

Guided by these lecture notes, I began by defining sociology as the study of what people do together, contrasting it with psychology's emphasis on what goes on inside people. Sociology studies large groups (countries, cities) and small groups (friends). I asked if students built the school they went to (Nooooo) as a way to show their dependence upon unseen others. Can you have a class if Ms. Duffy does not come and there is no substitute? (Nooooo) Can Ms. Duffy have a class if no students are there? (Nooooo) Then I asked about games that require other people. Can you play hide and seek by yourself? Seesaw? Checkers? I pointed out that these topics show the kinds of things that sociology studies. I also told them that my own interest is in interactions (I used the word) when people are together.

I then introduced the topic of rules: laws, formal rules, rules of organizations, such as schools, and informal rules. The first graders, as well as college students, talked about their school rules, some of which they made themselves (truer of first graders than of college students). We then discussed informal rules. I asked them about rules for raising their hands.

At first, they suggested that hand-raising was just something they knew. I asked, however, about different ways of raising hands: if one really wants to say something; if one doesn't want to but thinks one ought to; if one is anxiously waiting for one's turn. And how does one learn all this? I made the point that they learned and were following informal hand-raising rules without being aware of doing so. I did not use the sociological term "ethnomethodology," but that is the kind of investigation to which they were being introduced.

Figure 4. Photo Yuko Sato.

I had a range of topics available to raise for general discussion, but I tried to be alert to anything going on in the class that would serve as a sociological topic. During one class two first graders started to answer a question at the same time and we discussed how one decides whose turn it is when two people speak at once. We did not really come to a conclusion, but the example served as an implicit introduction to the sociological topic of "repairs" addressed by conversational analysis.

We then turned to what we had been studying in the course and specific questions that my students had raised from readings and class discussion. For example, throughout the years I asked my students to avoid versions of the phrase "getting down to a child's level" because it may be seen as condescending. Some of my students initially objected so we addressed the issue with the first graders. Do you like it when adults lean over or stoop down to talk to you? Responses varied, but some first graders expressed clear objections to the practice. [When the students later met together in small groups, the physical arrangement seemed to facilitate face-to-face interaction without the need for bending or stooping, as shown in the photo below.] My students concluded that it might be useful in working with children to be attentive to the power implications of different physical orientations. Other topics that arose included children's views of being patted on the head by adults, adults giving them The Look, and general concerns about adults' behavior. A few times the first graders came armed with specific advice for adults:

Some First Graders' Advice to Adults

Try to be a good example of what you want us to do and be.

Treat us the way you would like to be treated.

Remember that we don't know everything yet.

Teach us the things we *really* need to know.

Teach us the "how to" part instead of doing it for us.

Recognize that we're trying to do our best.

Listen; let kids talk.

Be ready to help us with *any* kind of problem.

Really think hard before you decide to spank us.

Ask, "Who did it," before punishing somebody.

Be polite.

Ask respectfully rather than ordering us.

Keep us safe, please.

Following the lecture, the class met in small discussion groups, one or two of my students and one or two first graders. The first grade teacher and I, in consultation with our students, prepared beforehand some possible topics as starting points for the discussions and listed them on the white board.

Some Ideas for Conversations Generated by First Graders

Holidays: Halloween/Christmas/Easter

Sports: Baseball/Hockey/Basketball/Soccer/Softball/Lacrosse/Gymnastics

Military groups

Pets

Animals

Toys

Art

Caterpillars and butterflies

Undersea life

Reptiles

Birthdays

Ballet/Tap

The small groups were constituted informally, with both sets of students looking for others with similar interests. Participants were expected to *exchange* ideas. My students were advised to engage in interactions not as teacher/student, researcher/subject, or adult/child but as equals and as colleagues – fellow students. I asked my students to choose topics that *they* were interested in so that they could participate with genuine enthusiasm. Some discussions remained on the original topic, others moved to other areas of interest. One of my students described what she found to be a fascinating conversation about friendships (not one of the topics offered) with each participant presenting ideas. My students expressed some surprise at the topics that the first graders wanted to discuss and the depth of the first graders' knowledge. They also described having learned new things from the first graders (for example, about undersea life and reptiles). I stayed out of the discussions, taking great pleasure in standing back and watching the interactions. The expressions on the faces of all participants and the sounds of their voices suggested equals discussing topics of common interest.

The class ended with a large display of food provided by my students (potato chips and dip, tortilla chips and salsa, fruit plates, cheese – including havarti with jalapenos – hummus and pita bread, cookies, cakes, juice, and soft drinks). The food table looked not unlike what one might find at an adult party (except for my Jell-O Jigglers). The first graders

Figure 5. Photo Author.

seemed enthusiastic about both the variety and their relatively unlimited access. An intriguing difference appeared between the children whose parents were present and those whose parents were not. The latter seemed to take larger servings of everything and come back for seconds and thirds. Those with parents present were much more carefully policed. One interesting issue arose regarding a rather spicy dip for chips. I overheard one parent directing a child away from it, saying, "That's for adults." Focused on a child's perspective and without thinking of how the adult might view my comment, I replied to the child, "But maybe you'd like it. Do you want to try it?" He nodded and did so – though he did not offer a judgment. I asked one first grader how many Jell-O Jigglers she wanted and she said "Ten." I simply gave them to her, for I had indeed asked. I had my own opportunity to experience the frustration of children when one of the mothers asked if I would like some ginger ale. When I replied yes, she poured about an inch into a cup and handed it to me.

The visit ended with the first graders lining up to receive gifts provided by the college (cups, pencils, and folders with the college logo) and distributed by my students.

The Influence of Adults as Audience

As a part of school rules for "field trips," some parents (typically three or four) accompanied the first graders. Initially, I had not anticipated that adults other than the teacher would be present and found parental presence, unobtrusive as it was, somewhat constraining. Despite their lack of inclusion as participants, they were observers and evaluators of the class. Through their presence, however, I also became aware of the constraining influences that parents could have on their children (as already noted in the foregoing discussion of food), as well as on the topics I felt comfortable discussing in front of them.

Certainly, some accompanying parents found the class odd, unfamiliar as they may have been with the perspective of the sociology of childhood and puzzled as they may have been with my treatment of the first graders not as children but as students of sociology. I did speak with the parents briefly before class, advising them that they might be surprised by some of the comments made by the first graders. Otherwise, I did not provide any orientation since the parents were not to be active participants in the class. I am well aware that the class may have violated their assumptions about children's knowledge, competence, judgments of adults, and concerns. [One of my college students described the class to her mother, a first grade teacher. Her mother said, "That's crazy." My student tried to explain that the class really worked but was unable to convince her mother that it wasn't senseless.]

To provide but one example of the awkwardness of the parents' presence, in the general discussion of "being a child" and "what adults are like," the first graders routinely displayed a subtle and detailed grasp of adults' behavior, motives, and expectations – knowledge that attending parents might have found both surprising and disconcerting. After one such discussion a parent was overheard commenting to another parent, "Don't you feel like an idiot?" Much to my surprise, I found that I came to try to protect the parents from what the children said, as well as to protect the children from making incriminating disclosures in front of parents. An example: I once asked the first graders how they obtained money for things they wanted. One child replied, "I steal it from my brother." [Fortunately, his mother wasn't

one of the attending parents.] I quickly changed the subject.

One of my favorite discussions, and one that I felt constrained to monitor more closely in the following years, was about the topic of what adults are like. In this particular discussion the first graders offered, unsolicited, some wonderful, albeit unflattering, imitations of adults' gestures, tones of voice, specific adult-sounding comments. One, for example, described her frustration at trying to tell her mother something important while her mother was preparing to go out for the evening. She imitated her mother putting on make-up and combing her hair while saying, "Ah," "Oh," "Hmm," and, in the child's view, paying no attention whatsoever to what she was being told. Fortunately, the parent being imitated was not in the class, but the teacher and parents may have known who was being portrayed. To avoid embarrassing the parents, I never solicited such imitations in the future, though I would have loved to do so. [Children's imitations of adults would be fascinating to videotape and study but may be too fraught with parental objections to be feasible.]

What emerges clearly from these considerations is the power that adults have to oversee children and their worlds. The literature in the sociology of childhood describes, for example, children's restricted rights to talk (Sacks 1972). Such restrictions are most evident in *when* children can legitimately talk, but the classes under discussion here also indicate that there are restrictions on *what* children can talk about – or talk about safely – in the presence of judging adults. The open and non-judgmental format of the classes led children to speak frankly in ways that were risky, but only because parents were present. Interestingly, the first grade teacher, who came to be familiar with the format of these classes, never intervened, never offered criticisms, and continued to return with each year's students, and parents in succeeding years continued to support the visits.

Post-visit Discussion

In the class following the first graders' visit, my students reflected on the joint class. I first asked my students what I was like because I want to be sure that I acted in the ways in which I encouraged them to act. They responded that I was the way I usually am in class except that I used a smaller vocabulary. They expressed surprise at the first graders' willingness to listen to a lecture and to participate in discussion in both the large class and in small groups. They spoke of their difficulty in not giving The Look, not laughing at some of the things that the children said when it was clear that the children were not intending to be funny, and not focusing on "cuteness." They expressed surprise at the children's food selections when unpoliced by adults. They commented on how some of the parents seemed to "hover" and "smother" the children (their choice of words).

We discussed how all of their readings framed the ways they interacted with the first graders and indeed served as the basis for the very idea of such a class. Together we identified particular insights from the readings that guided their behavior and that illustrated aspects of childhood that they had studied. Atkinson (1980), for example, addresses the social construction of childhood and the ways that adults "create" children, evidenced in the class by the actions of some parents and by my *not* treating children like children. The Stainton Rogerses (1992) explore the varied "stories of childhood," emphasizing that no one story has primacy. The children's stories of childhood were equally and legitimately "stories." G. Matthew's (1994) idea of children as philosophers directs attention to children's competence as thinkers, Cavin's to children as actors in worlds that, in part, are of their own making, in part not. Both ideas were evident in children's comments and actions. And Waksler (1996) illustrates some of the difficulties of childhood, difficulties that my students both heard about from the first graders and saw in action. Our discussions were designed to show that suspending ideas of what children are like makes it possible to explore children's ideas as *they* formulate them.

One year the college students had read Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's article (2003) about what children can learn from "rough and tumble play." When the children had finished with the snacks we provided and before it was time to line up to leave, four or five children began roughhousing on the rug. A few parents stepped in quickly to stop the play. My students were puzzled, wondering why they did so. [It might, of course, have been that the parents viewed such behavior as inappropriate in a college setting, though neither the first grade teacher nor I gave any such indication.] My students seemed particularly struck by the automatic way in which the play was interrupted.

In a number of classes students noted the sense of anger towards adults that was evident in the first graders' comments. It was clearest the one time they did imitations of adults but was also displayed in general comments. It is also evidenced in the above list of advice to adults, for presumably the comments address adults' failings.

My students became aware of the problems for children who are not allowed access to resources available to other children. For example, children whose television watching is restricted or forbidden lack what sociologists would call the "cultural capital" shared by other children. In one discussion of Pokéman cards, one child said that she didn't have any cards. I simply acknowledged her statement, but part of me wanted to take up a collection so she could get some. And children whose parents were not present in this class had more access to the food made available to all.

That my students found the joint class valuable is indicated in their final papers describing both the course and this specific class. The following comments are illustrative:

> I have realized that children do think about things in sociological ways and they have the ability to do so. This was especially seen in the class where we had the first graders come in and they did discuss their sociological ideas on certain subjects. (L.O.)

> I have an increased understanding of how sociology can increase my understanding… I feel that I experienced…this learning when the first graders attended class. Some of the children participated and began to think about the sociological ideas being presented to them. (C.K.)

> I enjoyed preparing for and having the first grade class come in to spend time with us. I learned that even though we, as adults, may think many of the things they do or say might seem cute to us, in reality many children are actually trying to do better, learn more, and are trying to understand what is going on in the world. There were many children in that class who seemed to be asking valid questions about what the professor was saying. I found that this was something I had never realized about young children. (M.C.)

My students have said that the course, and the joint class in particular, have changed the ways they

interact with children and have led them to be more attentive to children's perspectives.

A surprising idea for me that emerged is that children can serve as models for adult students. The first graders' enthusiasm, willingness to ask and answer questions, and overall participation in the learning process can be instructive for college students.

Some Unexpected Matters

While the classes always ran smoothly, occasionally some issues arose in a particular class that needed to be addressed at the time and/or for the future. Those who work with young children may be less surprised than I was at some of these matters, but within the framework of a college classroom they were noteworthy.

Familiar with the sound of a college classroom, even with spirited class discussions, I was initially taken aback by the level of noise and degree of activity of the first graders. They were respectful and, in adult terms, "well-behaved," but the energy of the class was distinctly more highly charged than what I was familiar with. I saw the first graders' active involvement as desirable but initially was rather surprised by what that involvement sounded like. Once I knew what to expect, however, I came to enjoy the sound of the high energy and enthusiasm.

I found it particularly difficult to know how to navigate what looked like a sea of raised hands offered by the first graders when I asked a question. I wanted to call on them in a systematic fashion but was puzzled about how to do so. I did my best to give everyone a chance and to give extra chances to those who seemed most eager. At times, however, it became difficult to respond to all who raised their hands, especially to those who did so for every question or with no particular comment to make.

Recently it happened that while all the students were seated in the square made by the four tables, all the first grade girls ended up together on one half and the boys on the other half. Because of where I was placed, nearest the girls, the boys had a much greater chance of being called on. Once I recognized the consequences of the seating arrangement, halfway through my lecture I moved myself to the opposite side of the square. The girls then participated more actively in the discussion while the boys continued their participation.

One year we met in an amphitheater-style room with curved long tables and chairs that were fixed in place. The chairs swiveled. As soon as the first graders sat down it became clear to me that swiveling in the chairs was a temptation not to be resisted. Instead of starting my lecture, I asked all the students (including mine) to swivel in the chairs so they could see how they worked. After a few minutes the students were sufficiently swivel-sated and I began my lecture with, thereafter, stationary students.

In one class I asked, "What are children like?" The first child said that children like ice cream. Though it was not what I had in mind, I continued the informative discussion of what children like.

One time my lecture was abruptly ended when a first grader asked, "When are we going to have snacks?" I said that we would do so as soon as we met in small groups, then abridged my lecture.

Conclusion

My goal here has been to reflect on joint sociology classes with first graders and college students for the insights that they provide. The first graders' participation in a college sociology class was based on the idea of taking children seriously as learners about sociology and recognizing children's expertise about what it is like to be children. The classes supported the legitimacy of these ideas. What the classes accomplished is best seen in that very description of what was immediately evident during the classes themselves and in the ensuing discussion with my students. I turn now to what I see as particular insights that emerged.

The most direct thing I learned from these classes is that they were possible. In the introduction I asked: Is sociology "too hard" for young children or is that simply an assumption that reflects an underestimation of them? Although I cannot answer this question definitively, I can say that the first graders listened to a sociology lecture, participated relevantly in discussions, remained attentive, and were enthusiastic about the ideas presented. They "did" a college class, and succeeding first graders did so over the course of 13 years.

Another outcome of the class is that these first graders at the very least now know that there is something called "sociology." [I never knew it existed until my first college sociology course. In retrospect, I wonder why I signed up for it since I didn't know what I was signing up for.] It is not clear how much the first graders will, in later years, remember of the details, but the idea and the word itself should be familiar. It does seem that sociology can be explained to first graders in a way that allows them to gain a very basic sense of what sociology is and does. G. Matthews asserts (1994) that children can "do" philosophy, even if they don't define it as such. A similar claim might be made for sociology, for children live in and act in a social world and, to do so, they need to have some grasp of its workings.

The class built on and illustrated a number of themes of the course and, more generally, in the sociology of childhood, and served my students as a forum for acting on those ideas. It offered an opportunity for my students to interact with the first graders not as teachers/students, researchers/subjects, or adults/children but as colleagues working together to achieve understanding. Taking seriously children's comments and concerns in a non-judgmental way provided insights into children's ways and into alternative modes of adult/child interaction.

The class also reinforced the idea that children are rich sources of information about childhood. They indeed have their own ideas about being a child, ideas to which adults may not be privy (and may not want to be privy) but that children may be willing to articulate when genuinely asked. When the influence of adults can be muted, as it was in these classes, important insights can be gained about children's worlds – those they share with adults, those they share with other children, and those they inhabit in the unsupervised interstices available to them. These insights hold promise for future research and theorizing about the sociology of childhood.

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I would like to thank the teacher, Ms. Joan Duffy, the children, the parents, and the administrators of Nashoba Brooks School in Concord, MA for their participation in and support of this project over the years. I also want to thank my many students enrolled in Sociological Studies of Children for their active participation in planning and participating in the class and their enthusiasm for the experience.

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Appendix: Photo Permission Form

Note that the request asks for signatures of both parents and children.

Date _____

PERMISSION

I hereby give permission to Professor _____ to use the photos taken in class, HDS 357 Sociological Studies of Children: Recent Works, on November 14, 2008 which include a photo of _____ (insert child's name). The photos will be used in articles that may be published in academic journals.

Parent's signature: _____

Child's signature: _____.

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Body, Possibility and Biographical Interpretation[1]

Abstract The aim of this article is to demonstrate how body-representations offer an opportunity for its visual interpretation from a biographical point of view, enhancing, on the one hand, the image's own narrative dynamics, and, on the other, the role of the body as a place of incorporation of experiences, as well as, a vehicle mediating the individual interaction with the world. Perspective founded in the works of the artists Helena Almeida and Jorge Molder, who use self-representation as an expression of these incorporated (lived) experiences, constitutes an important discursive construction and structuring of their narrative identity through visual creation, the artists enable the other with moments of sharing knowledge, creativity and subjectivity, contributing also to the construction of the contemporary, cultural and social imagery.

Keywords Body-representation; Biographical; Discourse; Narrative; Self-representation; Identity

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> For us, therefore, in the beginning there was existence and only later thought arrived. And for us, the present; when we come into this world and develop ourselves, first we exist and only then we think. We exist and later we think, and we only think because we exist given that the thought is indeed caused by the being's structures and operations. (Damásio 1995:254 [trans. A.P.])

[1] Arguments for this article were previously presented during the seminar *BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACHES, MEMORY, LIFE STORIES* held in CIES – ISCTE, IUL; Lisbon, Portugal on February 19, 2009, and organized by Professor Idalina Conde (CIES-IUL). I now present an improved and substantially enlarged version of the previous communication.

Considering the present moment characterized by complex social relations, abstract and general structures of thought, and by mediated relationships, which very often come from the image dynamics, this article's objective is to recur to the body-image as a determining and essential element of the visual and of the biographical in order to understand the self-representation imaging process, which influences personal and life narratives.

The representation of the body is important to understand this process due to the functions of the body as an element of connection between the self and the world, as a means of transmitting knowledge, and, at the same time, as a place for the biographical information consistency; but also because such analysis involves the study of the cultural, scientific, aesthetic and ethical schemes of representation that created the images, their meanings and the way they affect the individuals' subjectivity, their changing character, as the cultural narratives of images.

To study and recognize the role of the body in some of the contemporary artistic productions, understanding the author's intention is not sufficient. It is necessary to interpret the works (images), apprehend what they represent and question also the contexts of their creation.

In this scenario, how can the continuous presence of self-portraits and self-representations (unified subject) in contemporary works of art be thought of in the context of the postmodernist notions of fragmentation and displacement of the self, as in the setting of a corporeal condition, expressiveness, technological and interaction agendas in which the works can be interpreted both as a result of embodied and creativity experiences, as is the case, here presented as empirical evidences of the Portuguese artists Jorge Molder (JM) and Helena Almeida (HA)?

To answer this question it is necessary to take a look at the postmodernist criticism of agency, subjectivity and subject in the artists whose work is related to lived identities strongly articulated with a culturally rich experience engaged with the artistic world; the point is to evaluate how the concept of subject (self) is linked to the subject's private choices in painting or in photography, and the artist's personal options as the theme for his work. These answers meet, in contemporary theory, with a living identity (a constructed one) discursively created from those images, contemplating the place of the individual in a determined location for dialog and interaction – the body – as representing the inter-subjective relation of the vital importance of the subject with the world, in order to analyze the body's substantive matter and, therefore, the identity construction processes in these artists' cases.

On the other hand, observing the corporal condition allows us to challenge all classical dualisms existing between body and mind, and even overcoming them since it makes no sense to continue separating the body from the emotions (corporeal manifestations) when they are both physical and once human existence in the world is a physical one also. Paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty (1994:225), the body and the world are made of the same flesh; at the same time that this flesh of the body is participated by the world, it reflects it because they both mutually imbricate. This has a double meaning: subjectivity and materiality are in a relation of transgression and connection for the understanding of body's sense construction in the world. Therefore, the existence is incorporated. Or, as it is referred (to) by the

most recent neurobiology studies, the mind is, and has always been, daily concerned with the body to which it belongs. And this is done as an automatic background task precisely through innate or acquired emotions (Damásio 2003). This principle unveils a new body and emotions sociology, domains that had some difficulties in affirming the epistemological rupture, which both pursue perhaps because they were unable to unite efforts in order to achieve a common and obvious concept: that of the incorporation of social impacts (emotional, trends, stigmatization or identification) in the individuals' bodies and minds (Dores 2005).

Hence, in this article, it is emphasized and supported first and foremost the incorporated nature of human experiences, and thus, of the relational processes of identification. Secondly, and consequently, the embodied nature of the "biographical suggestion" used by the qualitative methodology here embraced, as by the photographic (body) image in analysis; that being essential for a closer approach to the empirical subjects when trying to understand the sense of personal, corporal and biographical choices.

The propensity for the biographical use of the photographic image is appropriate to recognize beyond the mediation and interrelation processes of the individuals within a society its pure character as (visual) documentation or evidence, being especially useful to describe the lived experiences of the artist as the "subject of the work" who, in these cases, is also the "subject in the work:"

> [p]hotographic images are pieces of evidence in an ongoing biography or history. And, one photograph unlike one painting implies that there will be others… The photograph, which has so many narcissistic uses, is also a powerful instrument for depersonalizing our relation to the world; and the two uses are complementary. (Sontag 2002:166-167)

In the case of these artistic expressions, images reflect emotions, experiences and life facts. These images of the body, mental in the first instance, are, then, materialized in the form of a document, a photograph, a portrait, a work of art, and a "body of events." This imagery reveals personal constructions of subjectivity, identity and corporeal experiences (lived body), which the artists express through the same vehicle – the body – in the work (living body).

Figure 1. *O pequeno mundo* [The small world] (2001) by Jorge Molder.
Source: Retrieved September 10, 2011 (http://www.jorgemolder.com/gallery/gallery.php?id=6).

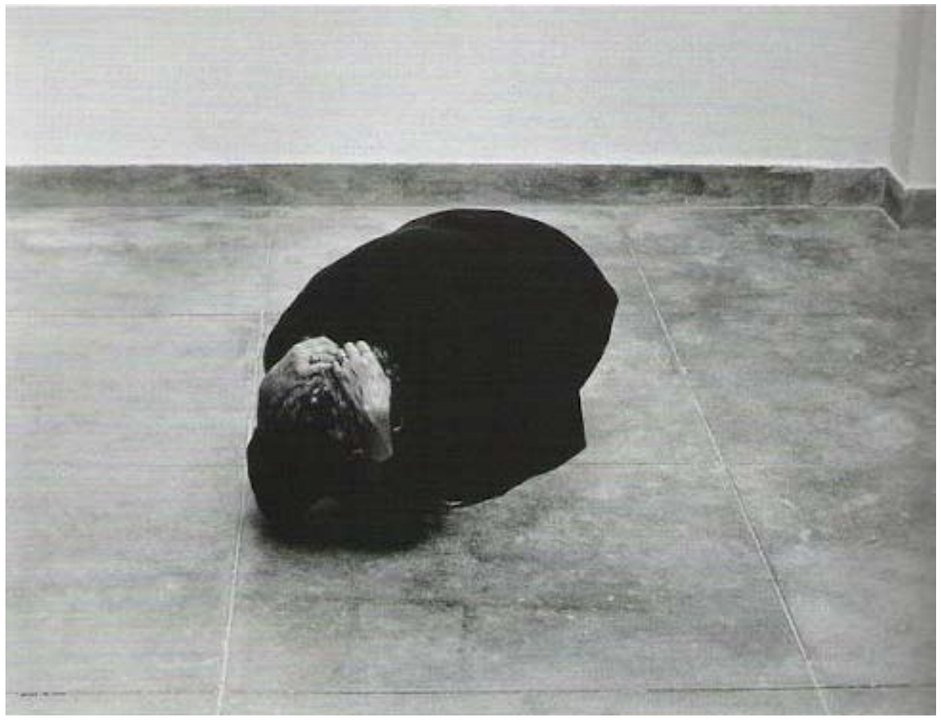

Figure 2. *Dentro de mim* [Inside me] (2000) by Helena Almeida.
Source: Retrieved September 10, 2011 (http://5dias.net/2009/04/10/helena-almeida-a-obra-fotografica-e-os-seus-desenhos-um-circulo fechado-e-perfeito/).

Accordingly, the presented methodological perspective strives to critically deconstruct the meaning and effects of images, recurring to the biographical reading, which is suggested by their proper composition but also through their visual interpretation and analysis. Namely, considering the self-representation as a discursive practice, produced on the interactional level, and which is both cause and effect of the social relations establishing them. Self-representation is considered as the result of the relations and of the positions of the subjects which produced them at external level, having, as such, a generative effect internally. In other words, mechanisms or causal powers – for example, agency of the image – which are here the object of deconstruction recurring to the previously introduced perspectives (biographical and compositional interpretation, content and discourse analysis).

Exegesis: Self-Image, Self-Knowledge and Subjectivity

The pursuit of the perfect self has always been present in the philosophic thought from Plato (*The Republic*) to Saint Augustine (*Confessions*) or Descartes (*Meditations*) until the American and French Revolutions, which delimit the beginning of the autonomous, political and social self. In other words, the beginning of the individualism as it is nowadays known.

From Rousseau's *Noble Savage*, Rimbaud's *Je est un autre* to Nietzsche's *Superman* or Freud's *Id, Ego and Super Ego*, every epoch has developed its own paradigms of individual identity. All history of modernism is replete of examples where the individual self takes its place and especially in a moment where the possibilities and limitations of representation

sharpen with the advent of photography and the imminently interpretative character of the pictorial work in the last decades of the 19th century. The struggle to locate a process of personal integration and rehabilitation (both of the body and the mind) in the context of the likewise problematic rupture founded on human experience fragmentation (social body) is the implicit purpose in the speculative project of the modern self. Many artists have developed their own practice based on this project (Frida Kahlo, Jasper Johns, and Andy Warhol).

In this way, a reflection on the individualism, the narrative of life and the abstraction have entered in the arts platform, accompanying the entire modernist tendency. During the following years, and until the 80's, already with a strong postmodernism connection, the artists continued being interested in working methods and materials enlisted in the theoretical principles of modernity, such as the use of the photograph, and the representation or the manipulation of everyday goods, sometimes considered as an attack on the critical nature of that tendency, as well as on the (massive) culture/merchandise (recent examples are Arnulf Rainer, Lygia Clark, and Cindy Sherman).

A look at this culture from the cinema, television, advertising and image in general says that the theme more broadly encouraged by it is the template for the self, a "device" in an everlasting movement, more apt, appealing, alluring, intelligent, rich, motivated and desirable, a hygienic and manipulative body, at the same time the produced and the producer – the physical and psychological body – that every person can adapt, building his personal self in his own image.

Thus, this study goes through a reflection about the question of the body in contemporary art, being based, therefore, in the idea that the understanding of the sense that the artist builds for the identity and his own image represented by the body lies in the relation between subjectivity and the social body.

The self, as a reflexive project, is a psycho-social narrative production, built in the encounter of everyday life. The material conditions, the discourses and the practical narratives interact to give shape to the personal self and its multiple identities (see Denzin 2004). Moreover, the self, and therefore the body, is culturally located, being denominated by some authors as the embodiment.[2] In this scenario, it is easy to think that autobiographical subjectivity, along with autobiographical texts (including images, in the post-modernist sense of the term), have little to do with the material body. Yet, according to Smith and Watson (2001):

> the body is a place for autobiographical knowledge because memory is incorporated like a textual surface in which a person's life is enlisted. And the narrative of life is an incorporated place of knowledge due to the fact that autobiographical narrators are incorporated subjects. (p. 37)

Briefly, Smith and Watson (2001) states that in

> exploring the body and the incorporation as places of knowledge and knowledge production, «life's narrators» perform several things: negotiate cultural standards that determine the personal uses of the body; they connect, quarrel and review cultural standards, determining the bodies' relations to specific places, behaviors and fates. And they reproduce, mix or question cultural discourses that define and distinguish the normative and non-normative body. (p. 42)

[2] The embodiment is characterized by "being-in-the-world," indicating the immediate sense of body experience doubly translated in the existence of a historically-informed sensorial temporary world presence, and in the existence of *a priori* existent pre-objective reservoir of knowledge, that is, the self and the culturally situated body, which entails the incorporation of standards, values, ideas, and at the same time, their ex-corporation manifested in the interaction and in the uses made of the body (Csordas 1994).

As a result, the personal's self, and consequently the body's reality portrayed, as above-mentioned, in biographical and historical narratives, in the politics, in the medicine, in the technology scenarios, and in the arts, does not reproduce only one personality built on the basis of a singular inner search. It reproduces, instead, the necessity to manifest oneself in the complex social networks (which, in the last years, have themselves as well become increasingly immaterial and ordinary in the digital and technological devices). They are very common imagery structures reflecting the trajectories' perceptions, in other words, they situate the individuals in an imaginary field that covers the link of modern daily relations through which individual subjects manifest themselves, originating and recreating personalities by applying different forms of individualization and constructing personal identity narratives that will be transmitted to others.

Also in the arts, through technical, digital and immaterial devices, personal representations disclose fictions or metaphors and the individuals' personalities projected in the self-representations. Through the use of different visual materials, for instance, the video, the photograph and painting, the artists' stage characters or diverse roles; they tell stories and create concepts or ideas. These practices can be understood on the basis of narrative theory of identity, of phenomenology, critical realism, the social construction of reality, or discourse perspective, whether in a more agency or structuralized orientation, revealing reflexive and narrative identities that will be rising from this whole process of personal creation and recreation, and that characterize the identification processes alongside with a collective aesthetic and acceptable normative ethics. Paraphrasing Arfuch, the dynamics of the biographical genre expresses a contemporary identity conception in its collective articulation with relational, contingent and transitory subjects' positions. For this reason, the narrative's identity is dynamic (namely, the trajectory's actantial dimension), and the action is the emblematic reason of that trajectory (Arfuch 2002).

In these cases, the artists' work usually shows the self as an imaginary construction, which can be identified with the postmodernist theories on subjectivity, the fragmented self, hybridism, fiction and image. Many postmodernist works are, therefore, ambivalent, illegible signs. The introduction of the self in multiple roles or characters reinstates the modern template for the subject's autonomy, suggesting that "postmodernist art produces signs that evoke incongruous and even contradictory meanings so as to deconstruct the conventional idea that a coherent message must be extracted from an image or a sign" (Owens 1994:70).

Hence, the representation in the artists working with self-representation is understood as an intelligible condition both in the work and in the self in which the singularity of the artist fits the state of improbableness, namely, for the reason that the self never stays the same, it is transitory and mutable; recreating the self-image, due to personal knowledge, embodied dispositions, and symbolic beliefs eventually institutionalized, the images of the body enter the postmodern tendency of hybridization and multiplicity or fragmentation of

the personal self, as this principle of embodied *dis*positions – the *habitus* – is not only a principle of repetition but a principle of improvisation as well. It is not on the basis of clear improvisation but of creation and diversity instead, that the characters are brought to life since "the *habitus* generates inventions and improvisations within the limits of the body" (Bourdieu 2005:46 as cited in Meagher 2007:9). "The sort of improvisation that is enabled by *habitus* is fundamentally, bodily. Indeed, embodiment is…utterly fundamental to the concept of *habitus*" (Jenkins 2005:353 as cited in Meagher 2007:9).

> [The] body is the place by which and where the historical possibilities are materialized by embodied styles, which are produced at the same time by embodied subjects… Identities are socially constituted by roles performed by actors. In other words, the body here considered as a social place is constrained, yet not determined by the installed dispositions via *habitus* (which is not a fate. On the contrary, he subsists to be renewed, it is a personal creation). (Meagher 2007:9)

Yet, the subjectivity's template that evokes the post-modernist logic makes it commonplace since it corroborates the way the artists introduce themselves to the world in a state of total freedom alongside inconsistency, the inconsistency of daily life. The same thing succeeds with the body and identity, with the biographical self so as to achieve the social self. This is also the core of discussion that goes from individuation to identification; hence, the body is the place for individual control that in the pursuit of personal differentiation ends up turning common (see Maffesoli 1999). Also, the (in) consistency of life existing in the (dis)continuity and passage of time is shown in the works in two other ways: in the aging of the physical body, and in the proper conception of the photographic act. However, it is from that *passage* that change is generated, and in the same manner that permanence (of objects, meanings, and individuals) prevails (see Ricoeur 1990).

Therefore, the changing individual and subjective performances, the cultural forms of expressiveness and understanding are also changing under the conditions of the post-modernist culture (Douglas 1978). The body as primary and the most natural technical object of a man (Mauss 1968) also changes under these conditions and, for this reason, the state of subjectivity and discipline. The discourses and forms of expression are shaped by these instruments of individuality, and, bio-political, aesthetic and ethical powers. These instruments of symbolic regulation act in different ways, transforming the body, which becomes the mediation instrument for consumerism, reproduction and the production of taste, et cetera. However, postmodern condition has proved that both Foucault and Bourdieu were scorned at counter-cultures when they theorized not only on power but on taste, too. However, counter-cultures, alternative cultures as vanguard movements, prove that there is no determinism of the institutionalized power. The occurrence of singular cases, with individual personalities standing out, and that usually become representative or symbolic of a genre, proves this point. Instead of following on a trend, they create their own uniqueness, creating through their particular expressiveness and style their own singularity and meaning(s) (that is, their significance).

Thus, these approaches have a metaphoric character held in the paradox of the body, the self, identity and life, particularly related with the self-representation construction, a genre comprising individual bodies, subjectivities and, on the other hand, the construction of social selves, and their symbolic meaning. Namely, identities created from artists expressiveness, personal styles, materials mobilized, technological and aesthetical realities to which they are allocated. This means one must look at the representation as a result of embodied experiences, *habitus* and embodiment, instead of as just an idea, since the body is a repository of culture and the performances carried out by the artist and their creative universe belonging to the work.

Nevertheless, and despite the agent's identity and responsibility's dynamics in structuring the personal narrative and story, Ricoeur (1990) reminds us that the way to report those stories also intervenes in the people's lives; the narrative affects the way they tell and write the lived stories that are personal. The present time, full of phenomenological propensities, puts the creation and the maintenance of meanings in the core of human activity divided amongst first order activities (lives as they are lived), which are mirrored in the activities of second order (reflection and representation, counting and reports of lived stories). Giddens (1984:XII--XXXVI) claims that these activities of second order provide the resources for first order activities (see Andrews et al. 2004:7).

Thus, in the process of reconstruction of artists' (personal and professional) narratives[3] we should also be doing an analysis of the forms of signification of the body as a (visual) discourse established and legitimized through its changeableness, and conveyed by means of its various versions of adopted bodily image in the self-images constituted as the "subject in the work." In short, look to the self-representation as a plastic characteristic of the work that results between other factors, from the way an artist uses acknowledgments and rules that regulate the art world – the style, the mark, the look for the place of the name, and of the work, as a reality that does not subvert the rules and the delimitations of the artistic field present in the practices and in the discourses about the practices, as well as in the evidence of this representative use of the body as self-representation, visually enunciating its authenticity as a work of art; it is also constructed in the autonomic sense of his own work in relation to himself as his recognition and acknowledgment of the work by others increases.

Through the process of recognition and disclosure there is a construction of meanings about the self, about the image of the self and of the work by the artists and the others (that is, the construction of self and work identities, thus, of social identities), therefore, the artist's individual subjectivity is complex and constantly negotiates with outside elements and agents, for instance, advertising and/or scientific knowledge, art galleries or academic and sometimes political institutions, concerning the demand/production of the works and affecting their construction, and consequently the artist's subjectivity. Hence, there is a difference between the representation of the body in the works as a means of connecting to the work's theme and, hence, its recognition, and the affection of the body to the works in other meanings, namely, to the identification with the subject who produces them (that is, a difference between the "subject in the work,"

[3] Dubar (2006:52) distinguishes the cultural and reflexive identity forms (socialized self and the acknowledgment by the *significant others*), and statuaries and narrative identity forms (role play and acknowledgement of the *significant generalized others*).

the work itself, and the "subject of the work"). In other words, the subjective embodied experiences are explored in different images, which generate interpretations later discursively explored in other ways (among other agents). These same ways are incorporated and reproduced by the artist, himself creating further meanings through these same discourses, thus, conceptualizing the self as a place of conscious agency and human potential (not just as fiction but meaning the "subject in the work," as the result of a fragmented and hybrid self that is built in a social world, and in a particular context) (Doy 2002).

Object, Purpose, Methodological Matters, and Presentation of the Cases

The study of the body, self-image and representation templates approached by contemporary art requires extensive knowledge, different concepts and methodologies, since self-representation is linked firstly to physical and instrumental skills of the body of the artists and subjectivity; secondly to technological and aesthetical questions (for example, the genre, the artist and his own style, varying accordingly with the epoch, established thoughts and trends), thus, linked also to discursive practices. Henceforth, and thirdly, it involves the study of the contexts of existence of the works of art and artists' specific worlds; as it involves visuality[4] as the way people see (understand) and look (the gaze) at images in a certain time (that is, its meanings and symbolic power).

[4] "Visuality" is the way in which vision is constructed, and is much related with the term "scopic regime," both terms refer to the ways in which *what is seen* and *how it is seen* are culturally constructed. While, the "visual" is what the human eye is capable of seeing (Rose 2007). To a further acknowledgement on this account see also Jay (1988).

The body represents the intersection between the individual and society, it is the means through which the relationship between the self and the other(s) can be discovered and questioned. Thus, the sense of the self is constructed on a daily life's pragmatic level in the interaction of the individual with the other(s) in the course of the practices and relations in which it is embedded. Hence, the person and his appearance are not only the product of society's daily circumstances but also the result of the individual determination. Hence, the relation with the body is not reducible to the body-image which engenders self-image (in the sense of the social psychology, the individual subjective representations founded from the representations of the body produced and sent by the others, that is, the representation one agent has of its social effects which implies a certain level of self-esteem). In fact, Bourdieu criticizes this position because the *habitus* dimension involves one relation with the body, inseparable from the relation with the language and with time, and because this mimetic process – the *habitus* – which as simulation implies one global relation of identification, has nothing of a mimesis (which supposes a conscious effort to reproduce one act, one word or one object) explicitly established as model, and the process of reproduction, which as practical reactivation, opposed both to memory and to learning, tends to be realized beyond the consciousness and expression. What is apprehended by the body is not something that one person has, as knowledge, but something that one person is. Embodied knowledge is not separated from the body, and it is restituted to it by the mimesis, which implies a full investment and a profound emotional identification (that is, individual and practical re-creation) (Bourdieu 2009:119-121).

In this perspective, the way of representing the body, that experiment forms of personal representation through the active participation of the subjects in the different contexts and scenarios, is a result of the lived experience influence which involvement can be emotional, intellectual or instrumental. These approaches inscribe not only the work but also the subjects of those works in the space of contemporary art. These practices often challenge standard political ideas through self-expression, interpreting queries of subgroups or peripheral cultures, emphasizing everyday concerns, making visible the invisible through the artist's body, in performance, video, photograph or happenings (for example, Kira O'Reilly, Marina Abramović, Regina Galindo, Vanessa Beecroft, Allan Kaprow [O'Reilly 2009:62-63]).

The representations of the body in the cases of HA and JM are inscribed in these classifications, though they do not anticipate a political vision of a particular subject; nevertheless, they present a critical perspective, in the sense of adopting a reflexive and particular position about the arts, the individual and his limits, using the body as a medium.

In order to explain or understand the meaning of a work of this sort, to explore the artist's intentions is not enough. It is necessary to observe the works, and try to understand them in the contexts of their production, interaction, acceptance, and disclosure conditions. However, it is also required to deconstruct the artist's visual and textual languages, which are made from a privileged position in terms of acknowledging the work and are very different from the one built by criticism's discourses, whether they are explaining or advertising in writing or commented on by others. In this way, the meaning is always subjective, and depends not only on who makes it, but on whose look it is; however, it is always conveyed by the visual representation at first hand. Thus, to explore more than it was intended is to look at the representation as a result of embodied experiences instead of as just an idea because the body is a repository of culture and the performances carried out by the artists and their creative universe belonging to the work.

In the cases of Helena Almeida and Jorge Molder, those performances are representations, situational practices delimited by embodied dispositions, this is to say that the work is a specific, materialized performance of culture, class, and profession *habitus*. Analyzing it from a psychological point of view, for example, hiding one's face can signify preserving the identity or to dislike one's self- image; on the other hand, to reveal one's image can suggest a good self-esteem, self-trust, as well as to appreciate the self-image. Thus, and, if the artist hides the face, it could be argued that he is refusing personal revelation; on the other hand, the work is still produced through photographic mechanisms, a methodology traditionally associated to the discourse of the representation of realism, allowing people to question the true nature of the self-portrait in arts, and complicating the conceptual scheme of the work in a way that the majority of discourses, both of agents and of artists themselves, show that none of the characters are similar to the personal self (selves). For these reasons, these artists' cases are inscribed in the self-representation genre, rather in the more accurately (in the sense of the similarity) and classical form of the self-portrait.

Adopting the self-representation direction, in these cases, is a means of demonstration and continuity,

of affirmation and signification, of personal and professional achievement or even the interpretation of oneself and life experiences. A social experience of subjectivity, moreover of the personal body and creativity institutionalized through the world of contemporary arts. Therefore, the study of these cases is necessary not due to the common calling of the scientific methodology for the universal but due to the necessity to find parameters for one sociological account of these specific artists, a model theoretically sensible to the problematicness of the singularity of the artist which for this purpose was compulsory by his high level of empirical evidence (Conde 1993:200). In sum, and for these reasons, I have considered that the contours of these cases implicitly suggest a biographical interpretative perspective in their study, as well as a visual and discursive one.

Specifically, the methodological perspective comprised the collection and interpretative analysis of documents about the history and narrative of the artists and their works (for example, published articles, interviews, curriculums, and catalogues) and the collection, observation and critical analysis of images. These materials are significant to understand the construction of the artist's life and identity. The focus of this method is the self-representation's practices understood as life experiences (that is, the works as an expression of life), having as basic assumption the importance of interpretation and comprehension as the key to understand social life (Melleiro and Gualda 2003:71).

Combining the visual and the biographical interpretation is a methodological challenge. The possibility of the biographical interpretation method derives from the emphasis on body-representations as an element, which gives meaning to the life experiences of these artists through *habitus* and embodiment, creating at the same time the singularity of the cases. This line of thought enhances one pragmatic interpretation of the cases from the standpoint of the dimension of life and practice that allows, on the other hand, considering the works or images as an individual's interpretations of reality, as narratives (because they are the expression of life) being possible to acknowledge also his discursive dimension.

Life, as traditionally approached by qualitative methodologies, namely by the biographical interpretation, is divided into three dimensions: life as it is lived; life as it is experienced; and, finally, life as it is narrated. However, there is no perfect correspondence between these three dimensions because there is an inexorable blank between reality, experience and expression. Thus, when investigating these issues, the investigator should have in mind these non-correspondences, as well as the ways in which people and their ideologies fit, to be precise, having in mind the contexts of existence of social phenomena. Although the body concentrates these three dimensions, experience and expression perform individual encounters, confrontations and passages that give meaning to events happening in people's lives. In the cases in study, the body is both the surface of that experience and expression, thus, of the biographical understanding of the artists' reality. At the same time, it is presented as a pictorial (always subjective) reading of the world. Assumed as a way of acknowledging reality, the biographical interpretation can result from subjective, objective and inter-subjective foundations. Subjective knowledge implies the description of a personal or other(s) experience in understanding a particular phenomenon. Objective knowledge allows a person outside of that experience to understand it independently of having or not experimented that phenomenon; and inter-subjective knowledge is found in the exchange of experiences or knowledge acquisition by participating in common experiences. The context of life is this matrix of relations existing between individual and social spheres happening in daily life (Bruner 1984; Denzin 1989 in Melleiro and Gualda 2003:71-73).

The visual dimension,[5] however, is concerned with the capability of critically examining the effects of visual images, entailing, among other things, thinking about the way they particularly offer a vision(s) of social categories (for example, the body, identity, representation, aesthetics, practices and discourse). Secondly, this understanding comprises not only the way images look but how images are looked at, focusing either on practices of visuality (that is, the construction of ways of seeing self-representation) or on their effects (in the agency of the visual object, that is, the self-representation and the construction of their meanings[6]). Still, meeting their contexts because all images are multimodal, that is, all images make sense in relation with other elements, including written texts and very often other images, although they are not reducible to the meaning carried out by those other elements (cf. Rose 2007:1-11).

Briefly, a critical visual methodology implies having in mind that images are not entirely reducible to their contexts; that visual representations have their own effects; also, thinking through the social conditions and effects of visual objects. And finally, consider our own way of looking at images because ways of seeing are historically, geographically, culturally and socially specific (Rose 2007:12).[7] Howsoever, the interpretations of visual images broadly concur that there are three sites at which the meanings of an image are made: the site(s) of the image itself; the site(s) of production of an image; and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences. Each of these sites has three different aspects or modalities contributing to a critical understanding of images: technological (any form of apparatus designated either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil paintings to television and Internet [Mirzoeff 1998:1 in Rose 2007:13]); compositional (refers to the specific material qualities of an image or visual object, namely, related to formal strategies, like content, color, special organization); and social (the range of economic, political and social relations, institutions and practices surrounding an image and through which it is seen and used). These sites and modalities often intersect and are accompanied by several methodologies, such as semiology, compositional interpretation, discourse analysis, content analysis, psychoanalysis, anthropological and audience studies (Rose 2007).

In the analysis of one image, and according with each method, the following aspects of each modality can be considered:

[5] This critical approach strives to interpret found visual images (in these cases the works of HA and JM); however, visual methodologies can also include the production of images as part of a research project (for a clear account on this perspective see Rose [2007:237-256]).

[6] The agency of the image, however, is not circumscribed only to the construction of meanings, it is recognized that the images have their own effects, that is, they do something unique to their visuality, which is also something excessive to the meaning itself. Some authors even suggest that it might not be possible to describe these effects in words because the agency of an image is something like the sensory and experiential nature of seeing (Mitchell 1996; Van Eck and Winter 2005 in Rose 2007:22).

[7] See also Becker (1995); Panofsky (1995); Banks (2001); and Sontag (2002).

Table 1. Sites, modalities and methods to interpret found visual materials.

SITES	MODALITIES' ASPECTS (e.g.)*	METHODS				
		COMPOSITIONAL INTERPRETATION	PSYCHO-ANALYSIS	CONTENT ANALYSIS	DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	SOCIO-ANTHRO-POLOGICAL STUDIES
Production	Medium	technological			technological	
	Genre	compositional		compositional	compositional	
	Author/Style/ Themes	social			social	
Image	Visual effects			technological	technological	compositional
	Composition	compositional	compositional	compositional		
	Visual meanings			social	social	compositional
Audience	Distribution					technological
	Circulation					technological
	Transmission					technological
	Relation to other texts and images		compositional		compositional	compositional

* These are the aspects of each modality that have interest in the present study. When analyzing visual objects, other aspects can eventually be considered according to the research objectives of each investigator. The method of psychoanalysis was not used for the purposes of this analysis, but it is considered that it could be interesting to evaluate ot the composition level in the case of some of the images (see Taylor 2006).

Source: Adapted from Rose (2007:30-31).

Hence, the methodological perspective is based on the assumption that the various dimensions and levels of human life; physical, biochemical, biological, psychological, economic, social, political, or semiotic (and linguistic), have their own distinctive structures, which have different effects in generative events through their particular mechanisms (generative powers). Because the operation of a mechanism is always mediated by others, no mechanism has precise effects in an event, that is, the events are complex and multidimensional and not predictable as effects of those mechanisms. Thus, life, and therefore discourse, can only be conceived as an open system, which is determined by mechanisms (hence, structures) but in complex ways (Bhaskar 1986; Collier 1994 in Chouliaraki and Fairclough 2005:19). Namely, a system in which their structural properties (that is, internal and necessary relations), institutionalized in relative permanencies, are not reducible to the parts that compose them; they emerge from their relationship, as well as from the networks of practices which are interconnected on an external level. In summary, discourse (visual and social representations of the body) is, at the same time, the genesis (cause) and outcome (result) which was instituted in the course of the practice. But, since the phenomenon of representation and/or the production of discourses takes

place during the interaction (either between different agents, or at the individual level between embodied and internal structures of the thinking of the artist), it is considered that external and contingent relations are also determinants of their results and, as such, of their principles (although, from the perspective of critical realism, they are less important than the previous in explaining the genesis of the events; they are relevant for the understanding of its effects) (cf. Archer 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 2005).

In this theoretical and methodological framework, and in order to present the biographical reading and visually interpret the empirical materials, it was possible to differentiate five main theoretical categories of analysis and interpretation taken from the existent literature on the subject: corporeality, identity, expression, technological and aesthetic discourse, and immediacy spaces. The decoded of artists' embodied experiences by the biographical and visual interpretation of the works through the categories of analysis and methods (namely the critical [that is, ontological] content and biographical, compositional, interpretative analysis of the visual discourse in a socio-anthropological sense of the approaches of the body) allows the perception of the artist's world, as of the image as object of artistic expression, besides enhancing the social imagery of one particular cultural period.

Table 2. Categories & Subcategories of visual interpretative analysis.

Subcategories	CATEGORIES				
	Corporeality	**Identity**	**Expression**	**Technological & Aesthetical**	**Immediacy Spaces**
	Lived Body	Identity of the work	Fiction	Technological discourse	Original conditions
	Living Body	Identity of the subject of the work	Narrative	Aesthetic discourse	Disclosure conditions
		Identity of the subject in the work	Self-representation		Acceptance conditions
			Body discourse		Interaction conditions

Source: Self-elaboration.

In the construction of their professional profiles and through the conception and creation of the works, HA and JM, add different social experiences of subjectivity, moreover, of their own bodies, to the space of contemporary art, (re)presenting unequally their singularity.

The representativeness and the specificity of the works, of international dimension, thus, justify the purpose of selecting the two cases for analysis: both artists had diverse but noteworthy roles in the advance and construction of the field of art in Portugal, highly thought-provoking and even worldwide spread of the thinking on the differences existing between the self-representation and the self-portrait in the arts.

Transgressing the limits of painting, Helena Almeida (1934-), with a solely artistic path, had a fundamental role in creating almost a new genre in the

undersized field of the 70's Portuguese art where she transcended orthodox standards and disciplines initiating new processes of making art, and leading photography, drawing and painting practices to another level:

> [t]here is in Helena Almeida an evident "archeology" of painting. Thus, in many series of photos and pictures (in the 70's: works or series, such as "Inhabited Canvas" [1976], "Inhabited Drawing" [1975] and "Inhabited Painting" [1976]), the author tends to approach more of the structural elements of visual language (point, line, plane, gesture, color, space, etc.) than from what they can offer as a "finished painting." (Vidal 2009, n. pag [trans. A.P.])

Jorge Molder (1947-) also had major significance in structuring visuality in the 80's in Portugal, causing his work to be as critical as is creative to the world of photography, and thus to the arts. His incomparable path, not utterly artistic, is remarkably acknowledged as their ideas are unequally expressed in the works:

> Jorge Molder's work uses all the artistic devices of classical photography: composition, subtle nuancing of black and white [and color], use of intense light and shadow, recording the intensity of an atmosphere or capturing a poetic moment. But, before these are given artistic expression they are first images in the artist's mind. The series and their titles pursue an idea, a vision; [as] nothing is in there by chance or coincidence. (Bergmann 1999:35)

Figure 3. *O Perdão I* [The Forgiveness I] (2006) by Helena Almeida.
Source: Retrieved January 7, 2012 (http://arte-factoherege-sperversoes.blogspot.com/2010/02/helena-almeida-2.html).

Figure 4. *O Perdão II* [The Forgiveness II] (2006) by Helena Almeida.
Source: Retrieved January 7, 2012 (http://arte-factoherege-sperversoes.blogspot.com/2010/02/helena-almeida-2.html).

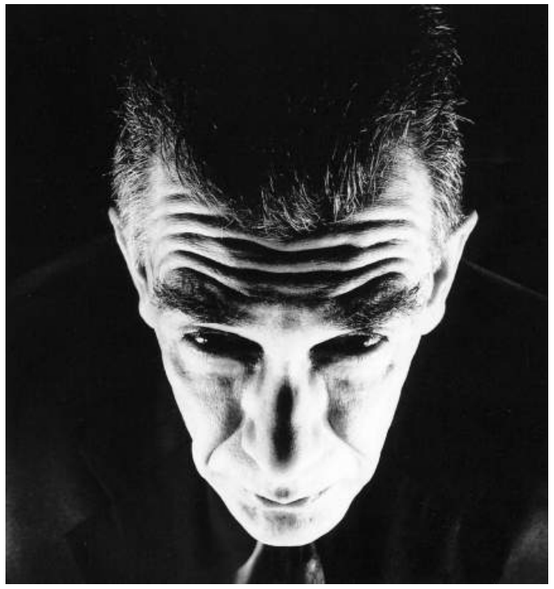

Figure 5. *The Portuguese Dutchman* (1990) by Jorge Molder.
Source: Retrieved January 10, 2012 (http://www.jorgemolder.com/gallery/gallery.php?id=6).

Figure 6. *The Secret Agent* (1991) by Jorge Molder.
Source: Retrieved January 10, 2012 (http://www.jorgemolder.com/gallery/gallery.php?id=6).

Results

Body-representation analysis allowed the life dimensions (experiences, expression and narrative) and the visual perspective (consenting in interpreting the artists' works) to be put in an equation placing the subjects in a multidimensional framework for the construction of their cultural and reflexive forms of identity, and, on the other hand, their narrative and social forms of identity, a process that was defined by the categories inscribed in the analysis.

Also, this analysis allowed differentiating the main aspects of the artists' works in a biographical, narrative and visual-critical perspective: ichnographically the visual analysis relative to each of the theoretical categories of interpretation has identified: black and white photography, almost always big formats, mostly of the author's proper body/figure. Occasionally, artists work with other mediums, such as the video and, in the case of HA, drawing and painting; and each work is usually part of a series.

The evidence of visual materials confirms the existence of the three main analytical categories of identity: the "subject of the work;" the "subject in the work" and identity of the work itself.

It was verified that technological and aesthetical discourses are extremely important to the cases categories confirming that body experience, body image and body sense are linked (through the instrumental use of the body in the work). The practice of self-representation implies cognitive, emotional and physical mechanisms of perception in their realization in which the body is instrumentalized in the work as its proper composition (technical characteristic of the work), working in conjunction with a repository of institutionalized schemes of (social) representations

that artists mobilized to the works through a pragmatic consciousness of the subjects (reflexivity) and an unconscious, mimetic process of reproduction (the *habitus*) of those abstract schemes of representations and embodied dispositions.

Self-representation is built in relation with others and the world (embodied experiences and knowledge) being both cause and outcome of the practice establishing it; the "subject in the work" is, thus, a reflexive representation, which through the body configuration (sense, image, experience) is, thusly, part of the identity construction process of the subject of the work. At the same time, as demonstrated previously, life and work are difficult to distinguish in real terms, especially in the case of artists whose singularity is built through the work and its recognition. Analytically, life, identity and work are, thus, considered as a (reflexive) project and a process built in the cross of interaction between the individual and the world, his practices and their acknowledgment by others (that is, external relations). These factors, arising from the singularity of the proper cases and inherently related to artists and the works' identity construction and recognition processes, are, at the same time, related to the image dynamics (that is, have their own mechanisms and causal powers on an internal level).

The three main lines defining the approaches of the body in the cases are: the experience, the expression, and narrative, namely, through their biographical and visual or discursive dimensions. The first is presented in the similarity agent/image and in the embodied nature of human actions, which is brought to the work in that way; and the second dimension is comprised with techniques, mediums, styles, and formal and plastic characteristics of the works in its visual and plastic sense. The decoding of this sense is in the image itself as narrative (that is, as product of the previous internal and external relations).

However, it is at this level – the visual – that the works assume different aspects between the two artists; since on the other level – the biographical – different aspects of their cultural and reflexive identities influence the approaches of the body in a different way to their works.

Therefore, the narrative aspect of the proper image is different in the two cases. It is noteworthy, however, that even if each image is part of a narrative, in a sequential sense of the term, images can also function separately. Namely, each series doesn't offer to the spectators fixed messages or interpretations held in immutable representations of the artist's thought, on the contrary, and although the biographical aspect is present in each image proper language (representing its consistency, its structure), visually what happens is the dissolution of the certainty, a melting of ideas in each composition without the imposition of an order or inevitabilities by the artists, since the conjunction of signs in each work offers to every person different readings (and because each observer has their proper vision); each image (or each body of images) has, thus, a narrative of its own, as the image is a place of resistance and confrontation of movement and change (a proper distinctive feature of the photographic, movies or video images); it has in this sense its proper dynamic, its own agency.[8]

In the cases of HA and JM the image itself is where the binary relation absence–presence is eliminated towards the emergence of an exchange field between these terms, an intermediary field between absence and presence, as Derrida (1978) states in the scope of the difference, a field continuously in process. The art, as proposed by Derrida, rejects the "form," which

[8] Roland Barthes (1981) uses the idea of "punctum" (wound, object or detail within an image that establishes a direct relationship with its observer); as opposed to the idea of "studium" or "the cultural, linguistic and political interpretation of a photograph."

represents the immobility, electing instead the discontinuities and slippages:

> [t]he images have to do with us; we have to do with us, with some continuity. The question of continuity of time is curious. We cannot find a unit with respect to time, but we find this: time does not exist, there are many times. And, our memory, for these times, is discontinuous. When we are young, we have the idea that the time will create a thickness, through which we will one day look at the past. The experience of the passage of time is exactly this: that thickness is discontinuous. There are things that have happened many years ago and could have been yesterday, and there are things that have happened recently and they were lost. … Is all our experience configured from a principle and a sequel? I think so, and I think not. We found marks of the primordial things, which are making their reappearance… [sometimes founding unforeseen things]. (Molder 2010:46-47 [trans. A.P.])

The rejection of a pure presence (free from the contamination of language, discursive thinking and traditional symbolic systems which reproduction structures derives their powers from an original essence) is the only possible answer to this problem lying between the artist(s), the other(s), and continuity of time, once the human conscious cannot escape from their proper reproduction schemes. The removal of a fixed center takes the action and discourse to a game of significances in which the representation subverts the established order.[9] Artistic production is, thus, a generator of thoughts, attitudes, interpretations and meanings, independently of the intention of its author. In this sense, the image is movement and time (present in the series character of the majority of photographic works, in the video modality and in the proper repetitive usage of the same image/figure), having two identification or definition mechanisms: the "differentiation" (a whole that changes), and the "specification" (the relation of the image with the signs that are part of its compositions). Those compositional elements of specification and differentiation are a matter of signs with traces of modulation of all types: sensorial (visual and sonorous, as is the case of the video-works), kinesthetic, affective, rhythmic, and tonal (as in performance levels). The image-movement is a plastic matter with semiotic significances. It is not one enunciation; it is one statement (Deleuze 1990:42):

> [i]t's like a temptation, to stay there and watch my own process, as in a dream with two directions. But, this is intolerable and urgently something is released from me as if I wanted to leave ahead of myself. All the way through, I already managed to get, by my own fingers... I wanted to experience a supreme effort in that empty and dense area of pre-movement, pre-event with their own dark and misshapen weight as kind of a penultimate expression. (Almeida 1982, n. pag [trans. A.P.])

Nevertheless, the biographical interpretation suggests that HA's exclusive artistic path is predisposed by her biographical origins affecting her relation with the arts, namely, the relation with a sculpture inherited from her father's background,[10] clearly inducing her choices with respect to the processes of how she makes, looks and, maybe, feels the work. In her approaches of the body she always ex-

[9] To look at the representation as a pure abstraction or discontinuous entity is the only way of solving the problem of self-representation as a non-fixed reproduction of the subject's image. Because the conscious will always make that connection in the first place since the evidence of the visual object and its perception has been cognitively and physically apprehended immediately by the body. The image always offers to the spectator a non-linear decoding of meanings since each person has one's own understanding of the world. In this sense, each image has also its own dynamics.

[10] HA is the daughter of the sculptor Leopoldo de Almeida and one of the main contemporary Portuguese artists. She started her career by participating in collective exhibitions in 1961; in 1967 she carried out her first solo exhibition; she studied painting in the Fine Arts School at the University of Lisbon.

presses the will to explore her own physical limits, which she experimented with since the time she posed as a model for her father. Evidently, those experiences shaped her work; along the way, that became a model of her own work. In fact, on numerous occasions she expresses the desire to become the work (obvious in the first works where she "dresses" the canvas, or even suggested by several titles named "inhabited"). For these reasons, in the work of Helena Almeida boundaries of disciplines were transposed from the beginning, as she felt the need to break away from painting, mixing the different genres and techniques.

On an external level, her cultural and artistic background also had an impact on her work, for example, being inspired by the performance's practices arising from the 60's, with direct connection with the arts of the body (body art), environment that justifies also her choice of the photographic use of the image, as she states: "…I think my main influences arise from the field of performance and installations," as with photography practices, "I think it was also important to know the work of other artists of my time who became interested in photography. It was my time; I used the medium of my time" (Almeida 2000, n. pag [trans. A.P.]).

Finally, other aspects influencing HA's work come from social experiences, like proposals and invitations in which themes are suggested by particular institutions or agents, and later lead to the creation of other works, as is the case of the video-work *A experiência do Lugar II* (2004), which symbolizes at the same time one affective experience of the artist with her *atelier*. In fact, the space is a physically powerful component of her work that visually enunciates its own singularity:

> [t]he *atelier* is both my body and a working material, such as pencils and ink. The *atelier* exists as if it were my own body [and]…I hope that in this body is contained all the painting. All painting has to go through my body…the presence of the real body is fundamental because the painting and drawing only exist when I exist as a body. (Almeida 2000, n. pag [trans. A.P.])

These biographical, cultural and social influences are transposed to the work through the artist's embodied experiences, providing its uniqueness and singularity: "I transpose to the medium my stories, my problems" (Almeida 1996:10 [trans. A.P.]). At the same time, as the work is being created, exposed and recognized, the artist's identity is also being built through this process that likewise involves a personal project, linked by ideas, intentions and personal needs. The approaches of the body in the work incorporate these reflexive and cultural identity aspects, that is, they are unconsciously structured by the artist's lived experiences, and, at the same time, they are structuring living experiences, defining in turn the meaning and identity of the work:

> [t]he "body-testimonial," with all the characteristics of the body...artist's daughter, artist's mother, artist's wife...but those attributes are disappearing to be only the painting, the body of Helena, Helena's painting. (Almeida 1982, n. pag [trans. A.P.])

In the case of JM, the process of identity construction of the work (and of the subject of the work) is similar, however, the artist has a distinct path, namely, in how it is related to the biographical, cultural and reflexive identity aspects, which give to his work its own singularity, as well: with a path not exclusively artistic, a degree in Philosophy and being half Hungarian and half Portuguese, JM transposes in a non-linear way those influences to the works, a fact that gives them their unique character:

> I can say, for example, that it is not by chance that the 1990 series is called *The Portuguese Dutchman*. I am indeed half Portuguese and half Hungarian, with a Dutch surname; the title refers directly to events in my past or present life. (Molder 1998, n. pag)

In his work the body is explored in a perspective of questioning the relation between the self and the other, between the self-portrait and self-representation as Molder plays with the endless variety of images of himself, which always ends up being the images of each other without ever ceasing to represent him. In this game he plays also with the paradox of life and identity: the representation is him but always mediated by others that the picture reveals (Oliveira 2009). Daily experiences, inspirations, dreams but also his characteristic pragmatic reflection are usually transposed to the works as what can be interpreted as *habitus* transference (Bourdieu 1984:175). Actually, as he confirms, "or by inclusion or expulsion, everything we do always marks everything that is happening in our lives (Molder 2009:16 [trans. A.P.]).

Uncertainty and hesitation are aspects that JM appreciates and always explores in the images. He is interested in the material aspect of the image questioning its immaterial essence. In the scope of that essence, he positions himself playing with ideas, with otherness: self-representation as the possibility of discovering the other in him, the double, a face and a body that in a certain way is liberated from the author, which lies between the abstract and the concrete, creating, in the end, a sort of confusion (Oliveira 2009).

Regarding his social and narrative identity, the weight of his other professional occupations[11] and personal experiences is evident in his work, besides answering also in his course to solicitations and honors. Lastly, the artist also had the influence of the art of the 70's, as well as of the structuring of the field of art in Portugal during the 80's as Helena Almeida, and which determined, in a relative way, the characteristics of the work. In the same way as HA, he went through a process of individuation culminating in the recognition (that is, identification, first of the image with the person, then of the image by itself).

Besides *habitus* and embodied experiences, the biographical condition is, thus, present in the works by the evidence of the passage of time through body (as through life), as Molder notes when he speaks about his images:

> [i]f I work with myself, there is a point in common. When an artist works always with the same model, this inevitably implies a constancy and variation. A constant because there is an element that is recognizable, because such a variation will suffer constant changes that are noticeable. For example, they cannot escape the tyranny of time. (Molder 2009:14 [trans. A.P.])

However, the other dimension of image is also enhanced in JM's case, the quality of the visual object as a pure abstraction, which has a dynamic and own character:

> …the truth is that [the image] produces a strange effect, because I find someone who, to some extent, is a double. I recognize him. I recognize certain traits that I am sure that belong to me, but at the same time, I do not recognize myself in…the images I produce... But, let us turn from the mirrors to the photographs: when I see an image that does not coincide with me and I don't recognize anyone in particular, still I recognize that there is someone who is not anyone in particular. I think it's an amazing experience and I would say that these images are abstractions. (Molder 1999:177)

As a final point, in this analysis the use of the biographical and visual interpretation methodologies

[11] JM has a B.A. in Philosophy at Lisbon's Classical University, and began his artistic career with his first individual exhibition in 1977. Professionally, he worked for the Justice Ministry (1976-1990) where he occupied several duties. In 1990, he began working as a consultant for the *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* (1994-2000) after which he was the executive director of *José de Azevedo Perdigão Modern Art Center* which he left for alleged personal reasons in 2009. However, as the artist affirms, he always has been close to the arts and artists' problems – "it is true that, as having no artistic training, I always tried to live closely with artists, and think about the problems of art with them" (Molder 2011, n. pag [trans. A.P.]).

has enhanced the inter-relations between the experience dimension and its symbolic articulation with the self-representations taken as narrative modalities (individual, social and visual), in which the body plays the main role. I have confirmed, through the analysis of the two cases, the significance of the self-representation in the arts as a site of resistance and confrontation where the discontinuities of the self are transformed in visual mechanisms of power, agency, duplicity, emancipation, embodied reality and identity, and interpretation of life.

Argument

The self-representation approaches of HA and JM comprise a relational field for multiple possibilities in which the body appears both as figurative representation and as metaphor or fiction. These approaches allow reflecting on how the subjects relate themselves with the space, time, technology, the unknown, the unexpected, and of the artistic sphere with society and life, inscribing the singularity, the body, the self, and identity as central concepts of this analysis.

The representation of the body or self-representation is, in these cases, cause (in the personal and cultural identity form) and effect (the statutory and narrative identity form) of the work and of the author's name, although this distinction is purely analytical.

In this perspective, the self-representation exercise is, thus, considered as a narrative process of identity construction (of the subject and of the work, built in the dialectical interaction between the internal and embodied dispositions of the subjects, and the external conditions of the field), and a project since there is an intention, a purpose (for example, recognition, legitimacy and autonomy of artists' names and works) while developing their actions or discursive practices (for example, the representation of the body, the use of the titles, the reflection on individual experience subjectively translated into the scope of the work).

Therefore, singularity of *habitus*, being invisibly translated into the representation through the variables of incorporation (for example, biographical, cultural, lived and living embodied experiences), has an important meaning in this process as equally has the proper visual agency of the image – the body in its abstract objectified usage.

Frequently connected with time (Jorge Molder) or further with the space (Helena Almeida) or simply with the way it (body) transforms itself into the instrument of representation, their works can refer to the way photography or video produces relativistic ambiguities in which the body appears as the basis of the identity construction processes as of the author's auto-biographical narratives (in the case of the artists, many times the narrative of the work is inseparable from the narrative of the author of the work, although each image has its own power and proper discourse, as previously demonstrated).

Through the analysis of the conceptions of the body in the work of HA and JM, with the purpose of establishing convergence points between the visual and the biographical interpretation of their images, it was possible to understand and justify the presence of these elements in the works, besides enhancing their proper agency (mechanisms and causal powers).

These artists working with auto-biographical materials reflect through visual discourse their own relation to life, and in the case of self-representation particularly with their own image and bodies generating constant thoughts and interpretations about that specific place where the life meets the work – the body – medium that visually enunciates the artists' relationship with the social world re-positioning the inquiry of the self-representation in the history of art and, in this case, sociological analysis.

Conclusion

The body as a substantive restlessness in the field of aesthetical questions has a duration almost as long as men's self conscience. Beyond the paradigm and thought's transformation verified through the centuries, the truth in contemporary time has witnessed the body's establishment as a prior subject in the artistic interventions in the second half of the 20th century. The body has represented itself and others; it has been the vehicle, the instrument and the matter, the metaphor, the advertisement, the fiction, the code, the form, the product, the figure, the aspect and the absence.

The biographical enunciated category makes it possible, in this analysis, to enhance some of the questions disclosed by artists in their images-works, serving as an interface encounter of different formations, dispositions, experiences and discourses. The body emerges both like an object and an understanding agent of the biographic space, research anchored in the performance where the body becomes an artistic proposition.

The artist does not represent something away from himself. He involves himself in the work as body-object in a process, making a poetic narrative about the work's space through his self-image as a shadow. From the absence and signed depuration of the bodies which give the metaphor a full meaning of its transience to its maximum explicitness with the spectator and critic's entrance and, in this case, biographer or sociologist's in their creative universe.

The social portrait is made by representation. Moreover, it gives way to self-representation of a fundamental biographical matrix in the decoding of the artists work. It is through representation of this body-object/body-subject presence and absence in and of the work that a simultaneous narrative is found, also being an expression of the process of creative production in a plastic exercise which the whole contrives and escapes: delight, existence, absence, memory, death, humanity. The personal biographic memory melts itself with aesthetical, discursive, social, political, visual and historical comment. A proper body melts itself with the representation of the body, which is made of a wide plot of connections.

With this analysis I have justified my perspective about the theoretical orientations that signal the research about the visual and life narrative, particularly connecting them with the identity readings of the body in social theory and artistic production. As shown subsequently to the conceptual phase defining the representation of the body using mainly qualitative, methodological and visual criteria, the text was generically marked by the identification of the different aspects of the construct relatively with each of those perspectives. The two different levels of analysis allowed the clarification of the self-representation in the confluence of contextual, biographical, and visual variables. The intention of integrating these perspectives accompanies the complexity of the possibilities in the sociological research when critically questioning the self-representation in the arts (in its most recent postmodernist tendencies).

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Book Review

Staude, Martin. 2012. *Meaning in Communication, Cognition, and Reality.* Exeter: Imprint Academic

Martin Staude, in the book *Meaning in Communication, Cognition, and Reality*, intends to elaborate on a theory of meaning, both as a theoretical program and methodological proposal. This idea of building a new theory is conceived as the incorporation of existing theories and approaches to meaning (in Semiotics, Linguistics, Sociology, Psychology, and Philosophy), and in return as the foundations for these other theories of meaning. Accordingly, the book has an empirical orientation and offers research questions. Power and law, chosen by Staude as social phenomena and vital concepts in the aforementioned disciplines, are being analyzed with the view of testing this theory, both at psychic and communicative levels.

Chapter one outlines the definition of meaning in the theory and is followed by chapter two where its philosophical foundations are discussed. Non-dualism is claimed to have hardly been pursued in the social science, whereas, as the author continues to argue, ontological heterogeneity between meaning and world is wrongly assumed as unbridgeable. Although non-dualism is here considered as a countercurrent to both constructivism and realism, Staude himself admits it resembles constructivism (in the sense of Peirce's pansemiotism) and thus may be treated as its radicalization and/or continuation. Chapter three discusses meaning in the semiotic triangle and chapter four is the extension and refinement of the definition of meaning from chapter one. In chapter five, the author enters the intense and long-lasting debates in social anthropology (emic *versus* etic) and in epistemology (realist *versus* constructivist) with the aim of showing they are not irreconcilable. The chapter ends with methodological and methodic proposals, all of which refer to the value of the multitude of empirical descriptions from different observers, as well as to the necessity of combining the method of introspection and extraspection. Chapter six integrates newly developed categories of meaning, such as meanings, meaning fields and meaning universe, and addresses the question of how a preconscious implicit meaning (medium) is transformed into a conscious explicit meaning (form). This process of activation (of meaning) is here not only communicative but also psychic, and the process of non-activation is taken into consideration as playing an equally vital role. As a result, the scope of social phenomena bears resemblances to Husserl's concept of *Sonderwelten* encompassing both social-communicative and psychic-cognitive worlds.

The book has obvious key advantages. First of all, the theory is applied not only to communicative but also to psychic systems. It is illustrated with the example of law/power phenomena, which are conceptualized not exclusively in terms of communication (this being the case of Luhmann's system-theory notion of communication media). Taking into consideration psychic operations and their role in the meaning activation process enables a broader conceptualization of social phenomena, including law and power. The author refrains from including here those psychic operations that remain completely unconscious, internalized uncritically and/or assimilated and integrated. This seems to be a conscious researcher's decision, but he risks, in this way, the neglect – for a meaning remaining in the unconsciousness may produce similar effects as it is during conscious activation.

Furthermore, the significant advantage of this book is the theory of meaning proposes new concepts, such as meaning fields and activation. It is being shown how they may be applied to a concrete empirical case, giving at the same time methodological guidelines for future research. In this sense, Staude presents the theory for it seeks to provide concepts/hypotheses, and methods, especially those that are worthwhile, being those that are the effects of critical study to the existent ones.

All aforementioned advantages of the book lay the basis for one more advantage. The theory of meaning, apart from being consistent, achieves its objective of combining universalism with relativism as it refers to a formal, abstract area of fundamental research, and thus can be applied to a wide range of concrete empirical cases.

One aspect of the theory, not entirely consistent, however, is its reference to an ontological monism of meaning, and a fundamental philosophical debate (dualism *versus* non-dualism). Integrist approaches are in essence encumbered by the critique of *coincidentia oppositorum*, an uncritical conciliation of opposites, especially if it implies combining opposite theoretical assumptions and paradigms. This seems not to be the case here as the reader is provided with specific and critically selected arguments. Nevertheless, whereas the first version of dualism etic *versus* emic is presented in a clear and coherent way so that the reader could perceive the link between the philosophical stance and the research field, and their logical constructs, the second version, realist *versus* constructivist, is unclear and incoherent. Omitting the author's suggestion to some of the readers to skip the philosophical chapter, an epistemological discussion concludes there with Staude's admittance of what he proposes is constructivism; besides, one cannot see there, unlike in the aforementioned debate in social anthropology cases, a clear linkage between a theoretical and an empirical case. This part of the discussion seems, therefore, to be of little productivity, given the fact that the final conclusions, the main concepts and methodology of the theory of meaning, are so closely related with several existing social science concepts, dualistic in nature.

Last but not least, the author's attempt at presenting his theory in a logico-mathematical, (semi-)formalized manner, is both unconvincing, resembling more a typical visual way of presenting arguments, and fruitless since formal logic is widely recognized as sufficient for the social sciences.

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Book Review

Maxwell, Joseph A. 2011. *Realist Approach for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage

In *Realist Approach for Qualitative Research*, Joseph A. Maxwell considers the general value of realist philosophy of science for qualitative research methodology and the understanding of some fundamental concepts essential to social scientific research. Maxwell's approach to realism is based on various philosophical and methodological discussions represented by philosophers, social theorists and social scientists both in Europe and North America. As Maxwell notes in the beginning of his analysis, scientific realism or realist philosophy of science contains many directions and orientations. In this sense, realism or realist philosophy is just an umbrella concept for a rather wide variety of theoretical views. Typical for this discussion is that realists defend the fact that the role of scientific research is to study objective reality, which exists independent of the human mind. This general orientation is also central for Maxwell's analysis of the fundamental issues of qualitative research, and he refers in particular to the works of a group of philosophers and sociologists known as critical realists.

Although Maxwell's study deals with difficult philosophical issues that have been disputed in the history of the social sciences for a long time, the general idea of his book is to introduce the basic ideas of realist thinking and to show that these concepts can help us in understanding the nature of culture, causality, diversity and, for example, meaning as an ontological thing (that is, real). The analysis is divided into three long parts, which consist of eleven chapters. In the first part of his study, Maxwell starts with the basic assumptions of realist philosophy and social theory by paying attention to the general features of realism from an ontological and epistemological orientation. In this part, he defines his relation to realism as a philosophical tradition. In the second part of the study, some more practical questions in conducting qualitative research are dealt with to show that realism helps in understanding the nature of theory, research design, data analysis and validity in qualitative research. In the third part of the book, some examples of the use of realist methodology in qualitative research in anthropology are introduced. By analyzing these examples in detail, based on his own research, Maxwell's intention is to show, in a concrete way, how realist orientation differs from positivism or a constructionist approach to qualitative research.

What does a realist stance on qualitative research mean according to Maxwell's study? In order to show the meaning of realism as an approach, Maxwell considers some fundamental problems of the social sciences related to the understanding of culture, meaning, causality and diversity. It is the goal of his book to point out that critical realist understanding of these questions helps us to clarify the nature of qualitative research as a particular approach to the study of social phenomena. Maxwell is quite critical, for example, of a traditional definition of culture as a system of shared beliefs or values, and develops his own solution for the definition of culture by referring to the realist ontology. In this respect, his approach differs from the critical realism represented by Bhaskar, Archer or Sayer, as he underlines the meaning of epistemological interpretivism developed by Putnam and Keller. According to this view, scientific theories do not mirror or correspond to reality but are models to describe the social world, which is in itself real and not just constituted by language, as constructionists tend to claim. In the same way, Maxwell's description of problems related to the study of causality underlines the point that causal processes are real and that there is a need for a realist view of causality in qualitative research.

The second part of Maxwell's book deals with themes that are closely related to the general nature of qualitative research, research process and the use of specific methods. Maxwell introduces an interactive model of research design, which is based on the idea that the goals of the study, the conceptual framework, the research questions, and the methods and questions related to validity are seen as components of an interactive system. Maxwell has developed this systemic or interactive model to research design in his previous studies. The purpose of this model is to underline the point that there are no rigid rules or fixed implications for the qualitative research process, and it is essential to be sensitive to the components of research design and see the connections between all these elements. He also underlines three central features of a realist approach for qualitative research. Firstly, it is important to see the research design as dealing with real entities, which describe what is actually taking place. In this sense, research designs are not just formal or abstract models or plans without a connection to reality. Secondly, Maxwell stresses that a researcher must reflect the choices she or he has made in order to become aware of these choices and how they possibly shape the research design. Thirdly, an essential part of qualitative research is to consider the descriptive, interpretive, theoretical and evaluative validity of the research. According to Maxwell, this analytical distinction clarifies the nature of the validity concepts that many qualitative researchers are using in their studies, explicitly or implicitly.

As stated earlier, in the third part of the study titled "Applications of Realism in Qualitative Research," Maxwell introduces two examples of the use of realist research strategy in qualitative research based on his own research projects. The first deals with a Plains Indian social organization and the second with an Inuit community in Canada. Maxwell does not consider his examples as ideal cases of using a realist approach, but he argues that both cases illustrate well the problems related to the use of

qualitative methods and the philosophical issues that are essential when considering the fundamental questions of critical realist methodology. The study of the Plains Indian social organization and its historical change in America shows how a critical realist approach is able to explain causal processes by integrating meaning, behavior and social structures in qualitative research. The other example, based on the study of Inuit culture and its kinship system, illuminates the nature of culture as a distributed rather than a shared system of beliefs. According to Maxwell, he was able to show the cultural diversity in Inuit culture and connect it to the analysis of meaning, social action and the physical world.

Maxwell's book is a well-written analysis of the central questions of a realist approach to qualitative research. It discusses the philosophical and methodological debates in the social sciences in general and qualitative research in particular. In this sense, Maxwell critically analyzes both the various approaches of realist philosophy and social science, and the current forms of qualitative research. In this way, he defines the fundamental concepts of qualitative research, which differ from the mainstream orientation. Maxwell's analysis of causality, for instance, stresses the point that qualitative research is a valid way of generating causal explanations for social phenomena – if the role of qualitative research is seen as process analysis. This differs essentially from the nature of quantitative research. Although Maxwell's book is a rather short analysis of the difficult general questions of scientific research, he is able to introduce important conceptual distinctions and analytical differences in the existing methodological debate over the nature of qualitative research. The book helps in understanding the underlying conceptual differences between various approaches and defines more clearly the general scientific status of qualitative research.

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Book Review

Czarniawska, Barbara. 2011. *Cyberfactories: How News Agencies Produce News*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing

Barbara Czarniawska undertakes the study of what she calls *news production in news agencies*. When considering the consequences of the news industry for advanced societies, including their economic, political and cultural realms, the importance of this research topic is unquestionable. Yet, just as broad implications concerning how news agencies influence and shape the public sphere are not the focal point of investigation, the book inspires to have a closer look at the inner life of news institutions themselves. By describing the processes of creating, fashioning and steering the news flow, *Cyberfactories* makes readers realize that it is worth considering journalism's institutional and technological backstage of which we are hardly ever spectators.

The book is accurately and purposefully located within the framework of media studies. Yet, it is not an emblematic example of these. It studies media not media broadcasts only. There are numerous interesting details about the way journalism operates within the *matrix*: from journalist techniques and story formats to aspects of company organization and handling the workflow. The strength of *Cyberfactories* resides also in the exploration of highly complex institutions of collective work. This is where the "cybernization" and "cyborgization" became self-evident up to the point where insiders have to stumble on them to realize these processes are of actual relevance.

The core of the research is built upon a set of substantial questions: What do news agencies actually do? How do they produce their news? What is overflow? How is it managed? There are six chapters devoted to the aforementioned topics. The first one presents a general outlook on the study and sketches of the methodological framework of the whole work. It also enumerates some of the basic theoretical concepts that stimulated the fieldwork.

The second chapter is comprised of an account of origins and development of news agencies Czarniawska was specifically focused on and where she was ethnographically involved: Swedish TT, Italian ANSA and Reuters. The first part of this chapter is devoted to Reuters – a brief historical reconstruction of main facts in gradual alteration of the company's structure and commercial strategy. The description is heavily based on secondary literature, rather limited in number but evoking interesting and widely unknown steps that led to the current supremacy of Reuters in the news industry.

The next part of the second chapter fleetingly covers the political context of the Swedish news market in the first half of XXth century. It follows some of the works of Swedish media scholars and traces the history of TT back to the late sixties of XIXth century. It also draws from experiments on the most important news industry-related engineering achievements of the time and discusses the importance of what is called the "Americanization" of the Swedish news.

The last part of the second chapter is the history of Italian ANSA. Contrarily to two previous parts, which were built upon historical records, this one relies mostly on interviewees' accounts on the development of the Italian news market. This shift is not only symptomatic as far as the epistemic basis of the historical reconstruction is concerned but it is also an important feature of the narrative style prevailing in virtually all of the chapters to follow. Extensive quotations, rich textual illustrations of topics discussed with people involved in the new production business and relatively finite commentaries on interviewees' interpretations are what distinguishes the field research report-like part of the book.

To sum up the second chapter, Czarniawska points out several predominant tendencies in news production: "marketization" where market is being considered not only as a source of best organizing principles (including exposition to competition) but also as a model instructing what the so-called "proper company" is; "cybernization" consisting of computerization and growing automation of control over news production. Moreover, the technology driven increase of news speed is examined as an outcome of the above-mentioned trends. In the second chapter and in the subsequent one, Czarniawska highlights an enormous impact on the contemporary news production of what she calls "silent co-workers," that is, computers, phones, notebooks, recorders and even data servers or satellites.

The third chapter is almost entirely dedicated to the description of a typical day in a news agency.

Swedish TT serves as an example of organizational structure. This part of the book discusses some of the formal ways of becoming a journalist and offers an instance of a full 24-hour news production cycle. It also advances some of the research structuring terms, like "circularity of news production," and draws on the notion of "distributed cognition" coined by Edwin Hutchins.

Collective character of news production is portrayed in the fourth chapter – "ANSA, or meetings and teamwork." Although teamwork in news agencies is primarily understood as a collaboration of humans and non-humans, this section of *Cyberfactories* focuses mainly on common-sense-based collective actions of humans. Readers have been given many examples of mundane talks during meetings and team discussions about ongoing tasks and workflow.

The fourth chapter also examines other central points of overflow management: dispatching tasks, categorization of news items and coding of information.

The fifth chapter undertakes a detailed depiction of Reuters as a *matrix* in both literal and metaphorical meaning of the term. Czarniawska tries to bring about the reconstruction of the blurry and razor-

thin boundary separating Reuters (called after Bruno Latour "macro actor") from the outer world. Czarniawska considers Reuters' *matrix* as an ungraspable ensemble of nodes in the net, where nodes themselves are linked to one another by means of information and communication technology, software tools and standard organization procedures. The common ground for the whole system is the speed of news production and market competition.

The last chapter is to put together and, up to a certain point, to integrate important analytical threads derived from previous parts of the book. Special attention is brought to phenomena like: circularity of news production, which includes situations when sources influence news producers, news producers imitate each other or cause events to make them news, and readers/listeners create their own news; the relation between speed requirement and standardization of product *matrix* metaphor. Czarniawska also signals and intensively develops key concepts of the book, the notions of *cybernization* – computerized control of news production and *cyborgization* – technologically driven modification of the producers.

When looking at the whole study from a more general perspective, there are two main aspects of the book Czarniawska accounts for: 1) conduct and scope of field research and 2) data classification and theoretical generalizations.

The range of research methods involved in the study convincingly reflects the complexity of the subject matter. Czarniawska's study is based on document and text analysis, participant observations (including shadowing) or individual interviews. In order to fully benefit from extremely rich material collected during the fieldwork, the book offers extracts from transcripts of conversations, excerpts from teleconferences, detailed descriptions of news agencies' business environment. There are also some photos from the "inside" available, for instance, Reuters' newsroom, or ANSA offices.

An impressive fertility of the fieldwork, which is undoubtedly an advantage of the study, turned out to be overwhelming for some parts of the book, though. Especially the 4th and 5th chapters are marked with a lower lucidity due to half-page long quotations and examples, notes from the field and extensive illustrations. Even considering the specificity of the writing, a reader might have some difficulties to find a balance between the author's task to provide a convincing account for the investigation and the readability of the given portion of the text. To some extent, this narrative style and form of argumentation continues nearly up to the very end of *Cyberfactories*.

Bits of conversations derived from interviews and team meetings seem to be called forth in accordance with a requirement of treating individuals "out there" as informants – those who know best what happens around them and are competent to name the world they perpetuate. It seems plausible to believe that this presupposes a particular notion of common sense. The latter part of the 4th chapter presents the author's point of view on this topic. Informants, to use this rather worn out terminology, have not been taken in fact as contributing to an ongoing process of defining and redefining their shared reality.

In this regard, the very way of asking questions and the manner of handling answers becomes crucial for the outcome of a whole study. In the case of *Cyberfactories*, the actual use of informants' utterances and the way of discussing their claims indicate the assumption that those small and large forms of discursive formulation should be treated as a source of acquaintance rather than actual object of cognition. On the one hand, to fade this distinction is to risk to reproduce in final theoretical generalizations insiders' methods of naming and framing the world. On the other hand, it opens the possibility of proving the validity of research conclusions by putting them under evaluation by "insiders." Race/competition category and *matrix* metaphor could possibly show how this distinction is far from being assured in the context of conferred interviews.

As far as theoretical inspirations of the study are concerned, both "vertical" and "horizontal" alignment of them are very interesting. A wide range of philosophical, sociological and anthropological traditions brought together allows the observation of the phenomenon of overflow management from a variety of different angles. It is understandable when trying to anchor one's own research in as many harmonizing studies of other scholars as possible, including works on detail-oriented ethnography of day-to-day life. Yet, much of these considerations are linked to more abstract ideas which are extremely difficult to compare. To give an example, Luhmann's vocabulary, highly technical and inevitably endowed with specific methodological and ontological prerequisites, is presumed as somehow complementary to the social studies of science (including Latour, Knorr-Cetina and the like). Other broad-spectrum sociological-philosophical references are the notion of appresentation of the world, disputes over the relation of mind to facts of outer world or Gabriel Tardes' law of imitation.

Nonetheless, *Cyberfactories* is much more than that. The general approach adopted and presented in the book is to put forth an unexpected thesis and then to advocate it by providing illustrative examples. The most obvious one would be the dissolution of the seemingly harsh line separating work of humans and work of automates. This idea has already stimulated the growth of the rich bibliographical record, including massive debates around works of the most renown figures in this research area (including Bruno Latour, Michel Callon or Edwin Hutchins). Although Czarniawska does not comment much on the controversies that have aroused among sociologists of science, cognitive scientists, anthropologists and philosophers, it is beyond doubt that *Cyberfactories* is full of illuminating general observations throwing another spotlight on the problem.

The book also endorses many middle-range notions that were previously coined by other scholars. To take just a few examples of theoretical pillars of *Cyberfactories*: standardization via product – multilateral imitations of ways of producing news outcomes; tacit knowledge as a non-discursive and to a great extent unconscious means of performing day-to-day tasks; shared cognition, as derived from works of Edwin Hutchins; gatekeeping – filtering function of software that the work of Desk and News Editors got significantly interfered with and relocated by. All of them serve to highlight the importance of the way overflow is being managed, cybernized and cyborgized in three news agencies under study. Throughout the book, such an eclectic approach, including referring general concepts to empirical data, proves its benefits as an exploratory attempt to grasp various aspects of the issue.

The analytical conclusions derived from this exhaustive study ought to be seen in the light of Czarniawska's multiple previous works on the topic. It is worth mentioning that *Cyberfactories* continues the line of organization studies widely known from other Czarniawska's books and articles.

In the multitude of fascinating systematizations about the inner world of contemporary news production systems, one appears to be of prime status – "factories employ cyborgs." The aim of the last chapter of the book is to integrate the detailed analysis of overflow management constituting a vast part of the study with *cyber*-related issues and *matrix* analogy. Those topics of research are signaled in the title of the book but a detailed analysis of both is left for the end. Czarniawska draws on the parallel, not on metaphor, between humans and cyborgs. She proposes convincing arguments in favor of considering news agencies as employing cyborgs, that is, beings of mixed nature. In this view humans and technology are not just interdependent – they become fused into one. Heavy use of technological devices, especially mobile phones and computers, is not just a way to facilitate every day tasks and duties. Under the pressure of market competition, budget restrictions and speed requirements, the use of technology is not a matter of choice – it is obviously indispensable. An ungraspable amount of information and multidirectional relations that come into play in the *matrix* transform sheer journalism into a news industry where cyberfactories are of pivotal importance. An enormous part of the collaborative work would be impossible if it wasn't maintained by hi-tech systems. It is especially clear in the case of the software (*cybernization*) used for selecting, filtering and dispatching information, texts and tasks amongst other actants (to use this Latourian term).

Czarniawska also seems to argue that cyborgs are not that important in their individuality. Since the brain of cyborgs is collective and it operates via Internet network, the heart of the system is its server, memory is located in electronic archives, et cetera. Czarniawska asks a striking question whether it is right to say that the system has become complemented by humans and not the other way around. Although, having as basic assumption, to release humans from tedious jobs and to liberate their creative potential, the mechanization has led to the increasing automation of work and produced unexpected, heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting consequences. Czarniawska observes that delegation of a growing number of duties to machines and to software forces people to work more and faster. Just as overflow and technology, humans also have to be managed in order to be able to adjust themselves to news producing systems: new joiners follow a formal training in journalism, they gradually get "flexible" and "easy-going." Software they work with is designed to be simple enough to let people forget the real human-technology interference.

Cyberfactories is surely not only for those curious about the alterations of journalism. Conclusions Czarniawska draws from her studies and from other works she explores can be inspiring for readers of a variety of interests even for the broad public. Ultimately, more and more people are involved in the immense flow of information not only as spectators but also as participants and producers. Circularity of news goes hand in hand with *cyber*-processes forming a characteristic syndrome of advanced societies. It is more than clear *Cyberfactories* proves this issue to be of critical significance.

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