

Mothering, Race, Ethnicity, Culture and Class

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Front Cover:

Nora Patrich, "Mother and Child," acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches. Visit her website at: www.norapatrich.com.

Susan L. Schalge and Cynthia E. Rudolph

Race as Cultural Construction, Race as Social Reality *Mothering for Contradictions and Ambiguities*

Anthropologists generally conceive of race as a cultural construction. The American Anthropological Association's policy statement on race asserts that, "it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups." For most people in North America, however, race is a very real entity that rests on perceived biological or genetic differences between groups of people. As such, it is said to exist outside of culture. Similarly, the concept of race is socially real in North American society, as it has tangible—and devastating—social, historical, and economic consequences. In this article, we examine the strategies that anthropologist mothers, including ourselves, employ to teach our children about both the "fictions" and "facts" of race. How do we sensitize our children to the culturally constructed nature of race? And how do we create an awareness of the fact that only certain biological and genetic variables are culturally selected to demarcate "races" and that biological and genetic variation is as great within human groups (or "races") as it is between them? More fundamentally, how do we do this while simultaneously instilling in our children an appreciation of the pervasiveness of "race" in society, an understanding of the myriad ways in which "race" continues to be used to justify and perpetuate social inequalities, and an appreciation for diversity?

Race is ever-present in North American society. Most assume that it is a natural, biological category that clearly distinguishes groups of people. However, race is neither clear nor natural. The discipline of Anthropology teaches us that human populations cannot be divided into clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Nevertheless, race is a very "real" social category. In this article we examine the contradictions and ambiguities of race in North America as they relate to mothering practices. More specifically, we examine how women trained in a discipline that problematizes race, namely Anthropology, negoti-

ate everyday realities and experiences of race as they mother and teach their children about cultural diversity and human variation. In our research, we found that race socialization is an important part of motherwork. We examine the deliberate steps mothers take to model the behaviors they want their children to adopt; construct environments that foster an appreciation for diversity; and give children tools to respond to racism, prejudice, and privilege. We also consider how mothering about race intersects with such key social categories as gender, age, and class.

Anthropologist mothers are often explicit in their attempts to socialize their children regarding race. Because they see race as culturally constructed, it is not presented as an essential or natural category. Just as it has been important to de-essentialize mothering and motherhood, anthropologists point us toward a critical understanding of race. The lessons learned from the mothers we spoke with can be applied broadly beyond the disciplinary boundaries of academic anthropology, and are valid for all mothers working to comprehend constructions of race in diverse and increasingly global environments.

My five-year-old son Louis and I were driving the twenty miles to the school where I work when we passed a house that had a play teepee in the backyard.

"Mom, Indians live there," Louis instructed me, pointing to the teepee.

"Well, honey," I wanted to let him down gently, "I don't think anyone actually lives in that teepee."

"Yes they do, Mom. You just don't know that family of Indians."

"It looks more like a play teepee to me," I replied.

Louis was silent for a few minutes then perked up again: "We're going to see Indians at your work today, aren't we Mom?" He knows that kids from the reservation attend the school where I work, and he's driven through the reservation on several occasions.

"It's quite possible, yes, a lot of Indians go to my school."

On the way home, Louis asked me whether we'd seen any Indians that day. Before I could open my mouth, he answered the question for himself: "I didn't see any Indians, that's for sure."

Knowing that he had, in fact, seen Native Americans, that he had actually spoken with a couple of people who were Native American, I was a little perplexed and not quite sure how to respond. My mind raced immediately to the media images of Native Americans I recalled from my own childhood: the shirtless young men riding bareback on horses, their long braids flapping in the wind; the painted and feathered warriors flexing their bow strings; the quiet, submissive women, backs slightly bowed from the weight of the children on their backs. "My God," I thought to myself, "what's he been watching when he goes to the neighbour's house?"

Instead, I told Louis that it's not always possible to tell Indians apart from

other people, that it's not always how people look that determines whether or not they're Indian. I told him that it's as much how people act, what they say and believe, think and feel that makes them Indian. Hopefully, I thought to myself, I can begin to plant some important seeds here about the cultural construction of race.

"But Mom," he almost interrupted me, "if you can't tell who the Indians are by looking at them, how do they know who gets to live in that special place ... what's it called ... that special place where the Indians live?"

"You mean the reservation?"

"Yeah, the reservation. How do they decide who gets to live there?"

I wanted to tell him that living on the reservation has not always been as "special" as he seems to think it is, that it's not always been a choice or a privilege, but as we're almost home—and his five-year-old brain already seems to be working overtime—I decided to save that conversation for another day. (Cynthia)

In the second grade, my son Bobby and his classmates were instructed to write down clues as to their identity for parents to try to guess during the school's annual Open House night. My son wrote, "I have Brown skin. I am African and I like sundaes. Who am I?" In writing "Brown skin" and "African," my son chose "race" and "ethnicity" as key characteristics of his identity.

This year, however, when Bobby completed the same assignment, the primary clue he wrote down was, "I like writing in cursive," thereby shifting the focus of his identity from race to abilities. Nonetheless, race remains a salient social category for both of us.

Later that same year, while watching television together one evening, Bobby said, "Mama, the man on the TV said that the police don't care that Black people are dying. That is not very nice, but lucky for me I'm half Black and half White."

Finally, just three weeks ago as we were driving home one evening, I was listening to the daily news on National Public Radio. In response to a story regarding racism, I made a noise of disgust.

"What?" Bobby asked.

I told him that some people hate others just because they look different, trying to explain their racist actions in simple terms an eight-year-old would understand.

"Just because they look different?" he asked.

"Yeah, pretty much," I responded.

"Well that's just crazy!" he said. "I mean, my family, you, me, my dad, my cousins, we all look different from each other and we love each other. Everybody looks different from each other, don't they know that? Are they stupid?" he asked incredulously.

"Yes, they are stupid," I replied. (Susan)

The above vignettes provide glimpses into our own experiences of mothering on race. We are both mothers who struggle with how to best raise our pre-adolescent boys in contemporary North American society, particularly when it comes to issues of race and racism. Although we are both white, our mothering experiences differ significantly—one of us is the single mother of a bi-racial Euro-American/African boy living in a small city that is somewhat diverse ethnically, while the other resides with her Euro-American male partner and son in a rural community that is overwhelmingly white. Despite these differences, we agree that race is of great consequence in North American society. We know that it produces tangible and devastating social and economic consequences and has brought about concrete divisions between groups of people, divisions that consistently privilege some groups over others. We both ardently hope that our sons will grow up conscious of and concerned about the realities of race in North America.

We are also anthropologists who define mothering and motherhood as cultural phenomena in our own academic pursuits as well as in our mothering practices. Feminist anthropologists and other social scientists have made great strides in demonstrating that motherhood is a not a “natural” category and that it varies cross-culturally. As Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) asserts in her ethnographic account of women in a Brazilian shantytown, for instance, “[m]other love is anything *other* than natural and instead represents a matrix of images, meanings, sentiments, and practices that are everywhere socially and culturally produced” (341). And in her in-depth examination of the role of motherhood in human evolution, Sarah Hrdy (1999) similarly points out that while mothering is often assumed to be a natural role determined by biological processes, in humans it has developed in social contexts and human mothers have always been embedded in networks of other relationships at the same time that they perform their mothering duties and activities.

While feminist anthropologists have highlighted cross-cultural, historical, and evolutionary differences in mothering and motherhood, other feminist writers have also taught us that these roles and activities are always constructed through race. Key in this regard is the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1994) who critiques feminist theories of mothering for failing to fully consider how it interacts with conceptions of race. As she purports: “Motherhood occurs in specific historical situations framed by interlocking structures of race, class, and gender. . . . Racial domination and economic exploitation profoundly shape the mothering context, not only for racial ethnic women in the United States, but for all women” (45). Other researchers also alert us to the ways in which mothering and motherhood are “racialized” (O’Reilly, 1996; see also Birns and Hay, 1988).

As anthropologists, we think these critical insights about the racialized and culturally constructed nature of mothering and motherhood can be enhanced by also considering the ways in which “race” itself is culturally constructed. In this regard, anthropologists have a fairly distinctive perspec-

tive on race. While we recognize race as an important category, we consider it to be a category of very special type—one that is culturally constructed, arbitrary, and in certain respects a fiction. Unlike most people, anthropologists do not perceive of race as an entity that rests on biological differences between groups or as something that exists outside of culture. As the American Anthropological Association (1998) writes in its official statement, race is “a worldview, a body of prejudgments that distorts our ideas about human differences and group behavior. Racial beliefs constitute myths about the diversity in the human species and about the abilities and behavior of people homogenized into ‘racial’ categories.” Introductory anthropology textbooks similarly define race as an “ethnic group *assumed* to have a biological basis” (Kottak, 2002: 706, emphasis ours) and as “a culturally assigned category” (Ember and Ember, 2000: 393).

In much of the literature on mothering, race, and child socialization practices, race is assumed to be a natural category, and something that is considered primarily by non-whites or parents of biracial children. So, while the existing literature recognizes motherhood as culturally constructed and demonstrates the intersection of race and mothering, few writers significantly challenge the “naturalness” of race. Drawing on anthropological theory, we define race not as a natural category based in biological variation, but as a socio-cultural construct that becomes “real as lived experience” (Goodman, 2005). Thus, we see a need to further expand our understandings of race and mothering as intersecting categories that are *both* culturally constructed.

Research and considerations

With these thoughts in mind, we decided to interview other anthropologist mothers about the strategies they employ to teach their children about the culturally constructed nature of race. In open-ended interviews with a dozen anthropologist mothers, all of whom identify as white, we focused on the following questions: How do anthropologist mothers create an awareness of the fact that only certain biological variables are selected to create “races” and that genetic variation is greater within groups than between them? How do they do this while instilling an appreciation of the pervasiveness of “race,” and an understanding of the myriad ways race is used to justify and perpetuate social inequalities? Or as one of our interviewees stated, how do we “walk the walk” when it comes to applying anthropological perspectives on race to our own lives?

In this paper we focus on three primary issues that emerged in our discussions. First, we address how mothers model the behaviors they want their children to adopt. Second, we explore how mothers construct environments that help children value cultural differences while also preparing them to deal with social inequalities based on perceived racial differences. Third, we consider the intersections of mothering and race with other key social categories. We argue that mothering and teaching about race cannot be isolated from such

groupings as gender, ethnicity, class, residence, and age.

Before looking at these primary issues, two points from our interviews should be noted. First, all the mothers interviewed hold to conceptions of race as culturally constructed. As one mother stated: "I've taught physical anthropology, so I know that there's as much variation within each race as there is between so-called 'races.' I understand that race is a cultural concept and I also get that it's a real thing that people use to judge people by." Secondly, it is important to note that some informants were explicit in the lessons they imparted to their children regarding race. These mothers actively created situations in which their children would be confronted with difference and were more likely to discuss privilege. Other mothers were more reactive, waiting for their children to pose questions about race or responding to particular situations as they arose.¹ For example, one mother explained,

I don't think I do much to teach them [my children] explicitly about race, it is more reactive. Like we were in the store and my boy saw a man with very dark skin and he said, 'Mom, look he is soooo dark.' I explained that people from closer to the equator have darker skin. I teach them that we are all the same, just with different physical features. (Rachel)

These differing approaches appeared to be stylistic differences among individual mothers and did not appear to correlate with the age, racial or ethnic identities of their children.

Modeling ideas about race and reactions to racism

All of the mothers we interviewed expressed a concern with modeling the behaviors and attitudes they hope to instill in their children. "I modeled the behaviors I wanted my boys to follow," one mother asserted. "I didn't want my kids to unconsciously internalize negative beliefs or attitudes. I didn't want them to see everyone as the same. I tried to teach difference as a positive." For several mothers, language has been an essential component of such modeling. On this point, one mother stated the following: "I purposefully never used certain identifiers. I wanted [my children] to see that everyone was a person, not just some label." For other mothers, language has been important with regard to the racial categories they use to describe their own children. Some mothers of biracial children problematize racial categorization. For example, one mother refused to impose a single racial label on her son, pointing out to him and to school administrators that, "none of the boxes or choices fit him."

Several mothers also reported that modeling came in the form of intentional involvement in social justice and anti-racism work. One mother was actively involved in the diversity committee in her children's school, asserting that her children "saw me working on the issue. There is Mom coming to school every week for these meetings, they knew it was important to me." Two

other mothers mentioned taking their young children with them to meetings of anti-racism groups, and how important it has been for them to have their children see them working to create social justice.

Constructing environments

Constructing environments for children, the second key theme from our interviews, takes several forms. All mothers indicated that they work to create environments that expose their children to various cultures and ethnic groups, thus hoping to foster in them an appreciation of cultural differences. Several mothers intentionally chose school settings or neighborhoods where their children would learn or live together with children from different backgrounds. “In some ways,” one recalled, “I didn’t make [teaching about race] explicit early on with my kids about quote-un-quote questions of race because their everyday experience would have been a multiracial experience...we purposely chose to live where we lived ... so that every day and every institution that they had a relationship to was in fact multiracial.”

Other mothers talked about creating relationships with people from different “racial” and ethnic backgrounds and about incorporating things into their children’s lives—food, toys, books, travel, languages—that will help them identify with their own cultural backgrounds and better understand others. As a mother of a biracial son of African and Euro-American origins put it: “I make a very conscious effort to make sure that he has all kinds of different examples; in his toys, the books we read, movies, the art work in our home. While it may not happen every day, we eat African food, listen to African music, he has African clothes to wear, and I try to speak to him in Swahili as much as I can.”

Several mothers also talked about the importance of constructing environments to give their children the tools to respond to racial prejudices and inequalities in U.S. culture. On the one hand, mothers of biracial children find it essential to create environments that foster a sense of self-worth and prepare their children to face racial injustice. A mother of biracial African-American/Norwegian-American children, for instance, felt certain that her children will one day face situations in which their peers in their predominantly white community will see them primarily as black and as existing outside of the white norm. Her husband, who is African American, experienced this and remembers the shock of realizing that people in his white community saw him differently.² “So part of that,” she explained, “is just preparing children of colour so that the pain isn’t as bad.”

Mothers of white children were more likely to focus on creating environments that taught their children to respect everyone, regardless of ethnic or racial background. Amanda Lewis (2004) argues, “[i]n a racialized social system, all actors are *racialized*, including whites. Because all social actors are racialized, at some level they must live and perform and ‘do’ race” (626). But not all mothers were conscious of teaching “whiteness” as a normative category

or a source of privilege in the same way that mothers of bi-racial children were. This may be due to the fact that, as John Hartigan (1997) points out, “the unmarked and normative position of whites is maintained by positioning ‘race’ as a category of difference. ‘Racial’ and ‘race’ are typically used to characterize difference and deviance from social norms” (496-497). These mothers took what is often referred to as a “colour blind” approach, stressing sameness and unity over difference and variation.

Teaching about race as it intersects with other social categories

The third key theme to emerge from our interviews concerns the intersection of mothering about race with other salient social categories. Teaching about race is complicated by such other factors as gender, class, ethnicity, age, and geography, to mention only a few.

With regard to gender, for example, the mother of two boys declared, “Boys are different.” She pointed to the language and competitive interaction style her sons developed. “At about eight to ten years of age, they got the vocabulary of race, they became more aware of it [racial stereotyping], they picked it up at school.” Her son told her that “men talk to each other differently in all-male environments, and that kind of language [i.e., derogatory] is used all the time.”

One mother felt that for her children, white kids living in a multiracial, working class neighborhood, class is a more salient aspect of their identity and life circumstances than is whiteness. “I taught my kids how to get arrested right away,” she recalled, “just like everybody else’s kids [in the neighbourhood] ... if [the police] stopped somebody, they stopped you. They didn’t care if you were white.” She also noted that being white did not make a difference with regard to health care and other services, “because there was no access to resources that being white gave you ... cause you didn’t live in a neighborhood that had more access.” For a second mother, a white mother of biracial children living in a largely white, middle class suburban area, class protects them from some of the disadvantages faced by other children of colour.

Nearly all of the mothers strongly believed that age plays a critical role in what and how they teach their children about race. One mother concentrated more on explicit teaching about race when her children were young, focusing her instruction on genetics and on “how there are no real differences between races.” As her children have aged, discussions about race have focused more on stereotypes about various racial groups in the dominant culture and possible prejudices that they, as biracial youth, will experience in their lives.

Another mother recalled that as her boys got older,

we could talk about more subtle aspects. I remember this time I was in the video store with Joe and there was an African-American man at the counter. The person behind the counter was requiring all kinds of forms of identification, just because he was not white. There were a bunch of people

in line waiting. I asked him after we left if he saw what was going on; how the man was treated differently. (Karen)

Categories of race are also complicated by those surrounding ethnicity. In part, this complication reflects a conflation of race and ethnicity that often exists in American culture more generally (see, e.g., Coard and Sellers, 2005; O'Donoghue, 2005; Hughes and Johnson, 2001). In this regard, two informants with biracial African-American/Euro-American children noted that their children are often viewed in terms of their perceived race—black—and that they have had to work to teach their children that their ethnicity is in fact more complex. One stated, “I have had to work hard to make [my children] feel that they are equally as Norwegian American as their white-haired blue-eyed cousins.” Similarly, the second mother explained that her son “mainly identifies as African or Tanzanian, which makes me happy and gives him a sense of pride, but I remind him that he has a German-American heritage too. So,” she jokingly added, “he has to eat *and* like his sauerkraut.”

Where people reside—cities or suburbs, small towns or rural areas, various regions of the U.S.—also influences teaching about race. One mother explained that when her children were young, the family moved around a lot. Her children, who are biracial, were treated very differently and, consequently, asked different questions about race and ethnicity depending on the part of the country in which they were living. In much the same way, mothers in urban, multiracial contexts often find that issues of race arise naturally in their children's daily lives, whereas those residing in largely white suburban and rural areas report that they need to be more proactive in teaching about race, particularly when it comes to deconstructing notions of whiteness as the norm.

Further pursuits and practices

Our interviews revealed a host of related issues for further exploration, both on the professional level as researchers pursuing the mutual cultural construction of motherhood and race, and on the more personal level, as mothers wanting to raise our boys to appreciate race as both cultural construction and social reality. As researchers, firstly, we wonder whether anthropologist mothers approach talking about race with their children differently or to a different degree than others. Relatedly, how are our findings influenced by the fact that we are both white anthropologists who spoke only with anthropologist mothers who were also white? Do anthropologist mothers of colour—or from other countries, for that matter—approach mothering about race in different ways? What about anthropologist fathers? Does the paucity of literature on racial and ethnic socialization by fathers in general reflect the fact that this task, like so many other tasks, falls primarily on the mothers? And what of the children themselves: are they incorporating the messages their mothers try to instill in them about race or, as one mother worried, “is this just one more thing that we [mothers] are going to be blamed for screwing up?”

It is clear from our research that race is anything but natural, stable, or unproblematic, and that teaching our children about race and racism is a fundamental and complex part of motherwork. Thus our charge to more consciously and effectively teach our children about the cultural construction *and* the social realities of race becomes ever more urgent. Will we know exactly how to do this? Will we succeed? We can only try. As Zora Neale Hurston (1969), one of the mothers of Anthropology, relays about her own childhood in *Dust Tracks on a Road*: “Mama exhorted her children at every opportunity to ‘jump at de sun.’ We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground” (cited in Boyd, 2003: 27).

¹Hughes and Chen (1999) find a similar distinction between “reactive” and “proactive” approaches to teaching children about race in their research with African American parents.

²In their study of racial socialization, Hughes and Johnson (2001) found that “parental background characteristics and discrimination experiences were important determinants of the frequency of Preparation for Bias” (1992).

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Towards White, Anti-Racist Mothering Practices

Confronting Essentialist Discourses of Race and Culture

This paper emerges from the author's personal location as the white (genetic) mother of a son who is registered in his father's Indian band. The objectives are two-fold: 1) to propose that essentialist discourses of race and culture discipline mothering practices in ways that reproduce racial hierarchies and 2) to propose anti-racist mothering practices aimed at disrupting normative patterns of white racial superiority. Essentialist discourses of race and the disciplining of mothering practices are traced through to their colonial antecedents which constructed white bourgeois women as paragons of moral virtue, and re/producers of nation and empire. This construction was dependent on the construction of indigenous and black women as racially degenerate and inferior mothers, and the production of "mixed-blood children" as dangerous to the social body. Discourses of culture have also been approached in essentialist ways both historically and currently in the context of multiculturalism and Aboriginal cultural revitalization as they currently manifest in Canada. Essentialist discourses of race and culture continue to discipline this white mother in ambiguous and problematic ways with regards to how she raises her son who is deemed to be racially and/or culturally different than she is: either raise him into white, male dominance, or raise him as Other—neither of which are viable options. Assuming that racism is maintained at least in part through the reproduction of white dominance, anti-racist mothering is presented as important work for mothers of white-inscribed children as well as for mothers whose children are racially and/or culturally marginalized.

I am a white, middle-class woman. My (genetic) son is registered in his father's Indian band. He passes for white, and I've been raising him alone for six of his eight and a half years. I've been told many times that I'm doing a great job with him, and that he's so lucky he has me. I appreciate these comments and I know they are meant to be supportive and encouraging when the challenges

of single mothering, completing a Ph.D., and trying to land the security of a tenure-track job feel overwhelming. Yet, because of my own knowledge of race, racism, colonialism, and whiteness, I can't help but also hear veiled, and likely unintentional, racist undertones in these comments. They confirm me as a "good" (white) mother against the unspoken backdrop of a distant (Aboriginal) father. It has also been observed on several occasions that I'm "raising him white." Again, my knowledge of racism and colonialism in this settler society in which I live, ensures that in this comment, I hear a considerably less validating judgment of my mothering practices. As H el ena Ragon e and France Winddance Twine suggest, motherhood "cannot be consigned to naturalized domains or idioms" (2000: 1), as much as I sometimes wish this were possible; motherhood is an inherently political site. I've struggled to make sense of my own position as a white mother amidst the politics of race and culture as they manifest in the Canadian prairies where we live. What I've come to understand is that the alternative to "raising him white" *isn't* necessarily to raise him "in his culture" as the "culturalist turn" (Goldberg, 2002: 1) of recent decades would have it. That this phrase is always a reference to his Aboriginal heritage rather than his European heritage or his contemporary, Western, middle class way of living, is evidence of precisely the racist binary of white/not-white that has been used to justify colonial and imperial projects for centuries. I've come to see that my mothering practices are disciplined by essentialist discourses of race *and* culture, both of which serve to reproduce a racist social order, and both of which, in my opinion, must be challenged.

My objectives in this paper are two-fold. I begin the first and largest section of the paper by tracing essentialist discourses of race and the disciplining of mothering practices through to their colonial antecedents which constructed white bourgeois women as paragons of moral virtue, and re/producers of nation and empire. This construction was dependent in large part on the construction of indigenous and black women as racially degenerate and inferior mothers, and on the production of "mixed-blood children" as dangerous to the social body. Discourses of culture have also been approached in essentialist ways both historically and currently in the context of multiculturalism and Aboriginal cultural revitalization as they manifest in Canada. Essentialist discourses of race and culture continue to position white mothers in ambiguous ways with regards to how they raise their children who are deemed to be racially and/or culturally different than they are. My point here is to expose the problem that essentialist discourses of race and culture discipline me into either raising my son into dominance, or raising him as Other—neither of which are viable options. Assuming that racism is maintained at least in part through the reproduction of white dominance, I argue that anti-racist mothering is important work for mothers of white-inscribed children as well as for mothers whose children are racially and/or culturally marginalized. I conclude by proposing anti-racist mothering practices aimed at disrupting normative patterns of white racial superiority.

Essentialist discourses of race

In his book, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (1993), David Goldberg locates the development of the race category in liberal philosophies and Enlightenment notions of modernity. He shows “race” to be a fundamentally empty therefore fluid category—one that has been able to adapt to specific politics in localized times and places. Goldberg (1993) argues that both rationality and race emerged in modernity “as definitive constituents of human self-hood and subjectivity” and he articulates the liberal paradox that “race is irrelevant, but all is race” (6). Amidst the liberal commitment to the equality of all individuals by virtue of their capacity for reason, there was a requirement for some way of justifying the often brutal and very clearly *unequal* treatment of various groups of people in the name of imperial projects. Emerging scientific disciplines such as anthropology and biology “defined a classificatory order of racial groupings—subspecies of *Homo sapiens*—along correlated physical and cultural matrices” (Goldberg, 1993: 29). These racial hierarchies provided precisely the justification required. According to this “naturalist” conception of race (Goldberg, 2002: 74-79), dark-skinned people, by virtue of their blackness, were said to be biologically degenerate—sub-human even—inherently inferior to white men who were constructed as normative, ideal human being. As less than fully human, such people were not believed to be deserving of equality, hence the conquest and domination of indigenous people around the globe, and the policing of racialized Others in the metropole was justified, and even produced as moral obligation. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said (1993) shows how religion and various cultural texts, together with new scientific disciplines and modernist thinking, also supported the construction of race as a category, and the construction of racial hierarchies. Whiteness was produced as the (in)visible marker of the inherent rationality claimed to be the essential feature of the modern liberal subject and the universally defining feature of humanity. White became the unmarked ideal—the rule against which all difference was measured and found lacking. Producing whiteness in this way, modernist liberal philosophies functioned then—and now—to veil “the hidden political and ideological *interests* [original italics] embedded in whiteness” (Yancy, 2004: 118).

Mothering nation and empire

As racial hierarchies were constructed in the context of imperial and colonial projects, mothering came to be located in the nexus between biological reproduction, and the production of nation and empire. A major concern spanning the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century was the racial purity of nations and empires. This required the disciplining of sexual practices including unmarried sex which resulted in “illegitimate” children, and miscegenation. Controlling the sexual practices of white European women provided the only assurance that white men’s children would also be white. As Ann Laura Stoler writes in her work on the colonial Dutch East Indies, racial mixing came to

be “conceived as a dangerous source of subversion, a threat to white prestige, the result of European degeneration and moral decay. Children—abandoned, illegitimate and of mixed-blood—had become the sign and embodiment of what needed fixing in this colonial society” (46). In her work on moral reform and the Social Purity Movement in English Canada during this same period, Mariana Valverde (1991) shows that in addition to the biological reproduction of racial purity, the production of a particular kind of “self,” constituted by white, Anglo, Protestant characteristics and desires, was believed to be central to the production of a healthy, vibrant nation. In Quebec, the “*pur laine*” were white, Catholic, Francophone women (Gosselin, 2006: 202). In spite of the ongoing contests between English and French in Canada, what is clear is that maintenance of white racial purity was equated with moral superiority. Thus, in this context of nation and empire building, “bourgeois women . . . were cast as the custodians of morality, of their vulnerable men, and of national character. Parenting, and motherhood specifically, was a class obligation and a duty of empire” (Stoler, 1995: 135). That white bourgeois women charged with the important task of raising children of good character nevertheless required a mothering curriculum which emerged in the form of mothering manuals, mothering classes and the like (Valverde, 1991: 59), is evidence of the effort required to actively construct them as “naturally good” mothers.

Whether “natural” or learned, white bourgeois women were constructed as paragons of moral virtue—the moral centre of nation and empire—as ideals to be emulated. Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack (1998) theorize white, middle class respectability as a structure of “dominance through difference” (341). Respectability was tenuous because it required the continual effort of constructing colonized people of colour, mixed blood children, and poor Europeans as inherently threatening Others. The white bourgeois woman occupied a highly ambiguous position because it depended so completely on the physical presence and labour of Other women in the domestic sphere to do the dirty work, and often to take care of the children. Because the boundaries containing distinct racial groups are socially constructed and highly permeable, Fellows and Razack theorize that the boundaries “have to be made and remade until the difference between the self and the subordinate Other appears natural and thus fixed” (1998: 343).

This accounts for the construction of colonized women as racially degenerate and dangerous influences for their own children. Writing about women missionaries and other workers in British Columbia, Mary-Ellen Kelm (1998) notes that “many Anglo-Saxon feminists of the early-twentieth-century moral reform movements were unable to see women of colour as true ‘mothers’ and therefore saw their world-wide task as setting the maternal standard for all people” (62). Moreover, “women field workers among the First Nations . . . condemned the child-rearing practices of Aboriginal women and argued that Native children were best raised away from their biological mothers” (Kelm, 1998: 62). Recommendations were also made in the Dutch East Indies for

the removal of indigenous children from their communities, especially their mothers' influence because it was deemed to be threatening to them (Hilgers and Douma cited in Stoler, 1995: 160). Of course, this recommendation was put into practice here in Canada in the form of Residential Schooling. Rosalyn Ing (2006) is among the many writers who explore the horrendous and widespread abuses that wounded several generations of Aboriginal children in residential schools. The violations endured there are argued to be the source of many intergenerational dysfunctions including the emotional distance that often marks survivors of the schools and their relationships with their own children (Ing, 2006: 157-172). In a move that blamed and further wounded the victim, many Aboriginal children of residential school survivors were subsequently removed from their parents by social workers during the "60s scoop" (Cull, 2006: 144-146) because their parents were said to be unfit. Hence, there is a long and varied history of Aboriginal children being removed from their parents' and communities' influence, supposedly for their own good.

While it was especially necessary that white children should be raised and educated to be proper—i.e., white—imperial subjects, the permeability of the boundaries also opened the possibility for racialized Others to assimilate to the dominant culture—at least to whatever extent was permitted by racist discourses and legislation of the day. Education was one means of accomplishing this. Indeed, a major grievance of Aboriginal people in their residential school legal claims is the imposed cultural assimilation of Aboriginal children. Moreover, Aboriginal cultural revitalization may be understood as a reclamation of the cultures that were targeted for "cultural genocide" by the assimilative processes of residential schooling. Parenting was also a means of assimilation and was intended to ensure children's ability to survive in a white supremacist world. Aboriginal scholar Verna St. Denis (2004), interviewed many Aboriginal people, both parents and children, who acknowledged that Aboriginal parents often chose *not* to teach their language and culture to their children in the attempt to "participate in the promise of assimilation...[that their children] would be able to avoid oppression and racism and be accepted into the dominant white society" (40). Today, in the context of cultural and multicultural discourses, these parents are said to be liable for the "loss" of their culture, which is pointed to as a sign, once again, of their failure as parents (St. Denis, 2004: 41).

Essentialist discourses of culture

The terms "race" and "culture" have been interconnected for a very long time. Just as race was long considered a biologically essential category, culture has also been approached in essentialist ways. For instance, Said (1978) wrote many years ago in *Orientalism* that Oriental culture (and, by extension, *the* Oriental), as an object of knowledge, "is a 'fact' which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable" (32). Today, amidst Canada's legally mandated celebration of cultural diversity under the *Multiculturalism Act*

of 1988, there is a tendency “to construct the members of a minority collective as basically homogeneous ... and as distinct as possible ... from the majority culture in order to be able to be ‘different’” (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 57). Under multiculturalism, previously marginalized racial groups become the containers of a commodified, imaginary, historical culture while, as Evelyn Légaré (1995) asserts, a “largely unchallenged Canadian culture is [still] normatively defined as a middle class, Euro-Canadian (i.e., British) society” (352). Hence, as Sherene Razack (1998) argues, “cultural differences perform the same function as a more biological notion of race...once did: they mark inferiority. A message of racial inferiority is now more likely to be coded in the language of culture rather than biology” (79).

Aboriginal cultural revitalization has been underway in Canada since the National Indian Brotherhood released *Indian Control of Indian Education* in 1972. In response to more than a century of racist federal legislation that impoverished and debilitated generations of Aboriginal people, this document called for a culturally relevant education for Aboriginal students, one that would recognize “Indian culture, values, customs, languages and the Indian contribution to Canadian development...promote pride in the Indian child, and respect in the non-Indian student” (NIB, 1972: 9). As enthusiastically and widely as cultural revitalization is taken up by First Nations, Métis and Inuit scholars, politicians, educators, and others, as well as by non-Aboriginal people who work with Aboriginal people in various capacities, there are also Aboriginal scholars who are concerned that cultural revitalization may have achieved fundamentalist status (Green, 2004; St. Denis, 2004) and result in contradictory and paradoxical effects for Aboriginal people. For instance, Verna St. Denis (2004) argues that cultural revitalization may well serve to maintain a racist social order by misdiagnosing the problem of systemic racism as a problem of “loss” of culture, thereby letting those in positions of dominance “off the hook” (45). Echoing Said, St. Denis maintains that cultural revitalization “depends on a construction of Aboriginality as a timeless, unchanging essence ... [and encourages] a hierarchy of Indianness” (41). Moreover, cultural revitalization “encourages incompatibility with socio-cultural change as the native must remain Other, distinctly different and identifiable” (St. Denis, 2004: 42). As Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes, “what counts as ‘authentic,’ is used by the West as one criteria to determine who really is indigenous, who is worth saving, who is still innocent and free from Western contamination” (74). Similarly, St. Denis (2004) notes that markers of “authentic” Aboriginal culture in Canada, including the ability to speak an Aboriginal language, participation in traditional spiritual practices, and knowledge of traditional stories, have become “gate-keepers” of sorts—markers of who is a “real Indian” and who isn’t (35-37).

At the same time, as Légaré (1995) asserted above, white middle class is still produced as normative. Under multiculturalism, cultural minorities, most often relatively recent immigrants who haven’t yet been assimilated, are encour-

aged to celebrate their culture within the limits permitted by multiculturalism. Most typically this includes dress, food, and music. As long as they perform what Jo-Anne Lee (2005: 164) refers to as “cultural whiteness,” for instance through such practices as operating in one of the two official Canadian languages, working and paying taxes, integrating with members of the dominant culture, and not doing anything that might offend Canadian sensibilities, they are welcomed as “new Canadians” and may be accorded what I consider “honourary” white Canadian status, even though they are not necessarily regarded as “Canadian Canadians” (Mackey, 1999: 3). Within multiculturalism, immigrants are encouraged to celebrate their “heritage” culture and simultaneously permitted to be (hyphenated) Canadians. But in Canada’s prairie provinces, where the Other is overwhelmingly Aboriginal rather than immigrant, where essentialist discourses of Aboriginal culture are pervasive, and racist notions of Aboriginal inferiority are still deeply ingrained in the popular imagination, this possibility of being both culturally authentic and Canadian is not as easily available to Aboriginal people. Well-educated, well-employed, well-paid Aboriginal people who live in “good” neighbourhoods in urban centers—i.e., who perform cultural whiteness—are often no longer regarded as “real” Indians at all because they’re neither authentic enough, nor deficient enough. Cultural whiteness is performed *at the expense of* Aboriginal authenticity.

Implications of essentialist discourses of race and culture on mothering practices

This history and these politics inform my contemporary position as the single, white, middle class mother of a son who is registered as an Indian and is physically inscribed as white. In *Mother Outlaws*, Andrea O’Reilly (2004) argues that intensive mothering, as the current ideal of mothering practice, is a patriarchal construction that is oppressive to women, and often, is actually unattainable by most women. As a single mother, it often eludes me even as I am disciplined to aspire to this ideal. Yet, as a racially coded construct, “good” mothering is still fairly available to me as a white woman, if only because my mothering practices are less likely to be monitored and policed than, for instance, those of Aboriginal mothers (Gosselin, 2006: 196). What I have learned in this exploration, is that I am disciplined by essentialist discourses of race to raise my son into white dominance. This would be easy to do given that he is a white-looking, middle-class boy. Moreover, given that Aboriginal boys and men in Canada are criminalized, policed, and in disproportionately high numbers meet untimely ends through violence and suicide, I empathize with those Aboriginal parents who hoped to protect their children from oppression and racism even if through assimilation. However, to actively raise my son into white male dominance would be to willingly perpetuate the reproduction of racist and patriarchal hierarchies that have oppressed so many people for centuries. I have also learned that essentialist discourses of culture discipline me to raise my son “in his culture,” which refers only to authentic

Aboriginality. As a white middle-class woman, this is not something I am able to do primarily because I myself have not been raised in an Aboriginal culture. But I also take very seriously the critique that cultural essentialism defines and limits people, and that notions of authenticity may marginalize them as Other. This is not something I want to impose on my child. Hence, neither of these seems to be a viable alternative.

Anti-racist mothering practices

Much has been written about the role of mothers of colour in teaching their children to survive and thrive amidst the racism they will encounter in their lives. As an example, Adrien Wing and Laura Weselmann (1999) present a critical race feminist praxis for Black mothers that includes survival, nurturing and transcendence. “Mothering to ensure survival involves guaranteeing the provision of food, clothing, shelter, health care, childcare and basic education, and all in conditions of safety” (Wing and Weselmann, 1999: 276). Nurturance means “providing individuals with the emotional and cultural self-esteem to survive in a racist, sexist, homophobic world.... Mothering, in the form of nurturing others, provides individuals with the intellectual backbone to survive the ‘isms’ that permeate our society” (Wing and Weselmann, 1999: 278). Finally, Wing and Weselmann (1999) describe transcendence as “the ability to rise above limits” (279). Under “transcendence,” they advocate the provision of spiritual and/or religious resources, and teaching children about their history and heritage. Without doubt, this is crucial activist work. But I propose that it is not work for Black mothers alone.

Much of what Wing and Weselmann describe as critical race feminist praxis resonates with my own white mothering practices. Because racism is largely a problem perpetuated by white people, even through discourses intended as critical and progressive (Comeau, 2007), I propose that white mothers can and ought to claim mothering as a site where they can challenge and disrupt normative patterns of white racial superiority. In her book *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness*, Jane Lazarre (1996) offers a beautiful memoir and testament that it is possible for white mothers to confront white racism. France Winddance Twine (2000) also provides evidence that white mothers of black children in Britain can and do develop racial literacy, deploy their white skin privilege to challenge systemic racism, and teach their children proactive strategies for mediating racism. However, confronting racism is also important for mothers of *white-inscribed children*, who, regardless of their ancestry, need to learn about race and racism as much as racially and culturally marginalized children do.

In my attempt to disrupt the reproduction of a racist social order through both my teaching and my mothering practices, I have identified the following objectives, many of which resonate with Wing and Weselmann’s (1999) ideas: 1) to disrupt essentialist understandings of race and culture; 2) to provide counter-narratives to racist, sexist, homophobic narratives; 3) to teach racial literacy; 4) to identify and challenge unearned white privileges (McIntosh,

1992) (and privileges of other normative positions); and 5) to challenge the myth of meritocracy, that life is a level playing field where individuals succeed or fail based on their own good choices and hard work. When I think about the children who, even in my son's very progressive school, are marginalized because of how they look, or because their first language is neither English nor French, or the girls who wear hijab, I have no doubt that they are painfully aware of their own marginalization. Faced with this reality, mothers of marginalized children cannot avoid discussions about racism and other forms of oppression with their children. However, as my son was able to articulate at only six and a half years of age, "some kids don't like other kids who are brown." Avoiding direct and critical conversations about racism with white, normatively positioned children, whether as mothers or as teachers, does not protect their innocence. As my son taught me, even young children aren't colour blind or innocent about racist exclusions. Avoiding talk of racism is a discourse of denial (Jiwani, 2006) which only protects white racial dominance.

Conclusion

At eight and a half years old, my son knows he has white skin like his mother, and he knows that his father and extended family on his dad's side are First Nations people who often speak Cree to each other. He has seen his own Treaty Card that I keep in my wallet, and he's aware that his First Nations ancestors have always lived in this part of Canada. He also knows that my ancestors came mostly from France a very long time ago, that many of them spoke French, and that his First Nations ancestors suffered many losses when the Europeans settled here. I am teaching him that all of this is his heritage, and I have described "heritage" as a kind of family treasure—the richness we get from our history and all of our ancestors. As he gets older and more capable of dealing with complex ideas, I want him to know that the derogatory comments he will undoubtedly hear about Indians are ways of remaking the boundaries that protect dominance. I also want him to know that it is unjust if his hard work pays off better and faster than somebody else's simply because he appears to be a white male. I want him to understand how he has been positioned by history, and by discourses of race, culture, and gender, in very ambiguous ways. I think it's crucial that he understands that neither his race, nor his culture, run in his blood, or make him any better or any worse than anybody else. I hope he will think I've been a good mother.

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Mothering White Children *An Africana Canadian Woman's Experience*

Unsafe environmental conditions, including parents' inability to care for them, abuse and high risk behaviour by their primary caregivers, force many children out of the places they call home. When they leave home, the Canadian state assumes immediate and sometimes long-term care for them. Caring involves being placed in foster homes that offer a balance between the needs of the children and the provisional abilities of the foster families. This is not unusual; however, placing a White foster child with a Black foster family, headed by a single woman in a middle class predominantly White suburb, offers sufficient challenges to warrant further exploration of how racist attitudes are maintained and transformed in everyday relationships between state representatives, the general White population and the Black family. This article explores my experience of ongoing tensions along racial lines while caring for children as a foster parent.

Introduction

This article explores my experiences of mother as a foster parent for the Canadian state. The discussion entails challenges experienced and acts of resistance from professionals including representatives from a child welfare agency, teachers, community agencies, and members of our local community. A response is offered addressing the stereotypical notion of Black mothering and questions are raised about the institutional practices in child welfare agencies specific to White children's placement with Black or racialized families. The paper concludes by questioning practitioners' colour-blind approach in their work with racialized foster parents and solidifying Black women's roles as mothers.

Offering children safe, nurturing, and supportive environments to live is one of the most important roles of a foster family. When children are placed

in homes and they are guided to reach their fullest potential, fostering children can be seen as a noble cause. I am motivated by the potential intrinsic rewards in mothering children who are away from their mothers. I take pride in experiencing the children's growth and changes along the way and yes, I take some of the credit for the children excelling. In fact, I consider my role as a foster parent one of civic duty and social contribution. I am an African Canadian woman of Caribbean descent; I mother every child in my presence including my two biological children, nieces, nephews, friends' children, and my children's friends. I am unpartnered (single); I mother my children with the support of family and friends. I live in an affluent suburb that is predominantly White, middle class, heterosexual, two-parent families. Why do I want to mother foster children? I became interested in mothering foster children of African descent in light of their increasing numbers under the care of child welfare agencies and the limited culturally appropriate foster parents to care for them.

In spite of my commitment to children of African descent, I did not hesitate to offer a young eleven-year-old child of European descent a home when I was asked to do so. My first priority is to offer children a safe and nurturing environment, help them to develop and maintain positive relationships with family, and where possible assist with family reunification. Foster parents committed to nurturing children and working with the child welfare agencies towards family reunification is not unique. John Nasuti, Reginald York and Karen Sandell (2004) suggest that Black foster families often work toward these goals. The child was a part of our family for 26 months and during that time, I was privileged to work directly with some practitioners in the child welfare agency and in other community agencies who supported my position as the child's primary caregiver unconditionally and accepted my mothering role. However, numerous individuals including social workers, teachers, other foster parents, medical practitioners, community members, and the child's biological father challenged my mothering role as it pertained to this child. These challenges are the focus of this discussion.

The specific experiences that occur while mothering this child are numerous, however, this paper focuses on my interactions with primarily White women (non-racialized) social workers in the child welfare agency and community agencies. Specifically, I address practitioners' attempts to delegitimize my mothering role in this child's life and their resistance to my role as the child's primary caregiver. I document my experiences of mothering White children to challenge the notion of the Black woman as the mammy, to disrupt the pathological notions of the insensitive Black foster mother, and to make visible my experiences of racialized and colonized identity in a space that is designed for the good White mother.

Resistance comes in many forms

Motherhood is constructed through a particular lens and, in Canada, is based on the values of White middle-class women's perspective. Andrea O'Reilly

(2006) suggests sensitive mothering has become the dominant discourse in mothering; contemporary and “good mothering is defined as child-centered and is characterized by flexibility, spontaneity, democracy, affection, nurturance, and playfulness” (81). This concurs with my experience of mothering children for the state. I am expected to chauffeur children to and from social, extracurricular, and academic activities, schedule appointments, arrange transportation, and accompany children to the appointments (e.g. doctor, dentist, and therapist), attend to school concerns, help with homework, liaise with biological families and numerous professionals, attend agency meetings, cook, shop, offer guidance, arrange birthday parties, spend quality time, and love the children. Often agency personnel seem to forget that foster parents have primary families for whom they cared for before the placement of foster children and that those familiar obligations continue in spite of the addition of foster children.

My first recollection of being branded an insensitive and incompetent foster mother occurred when a community agency case worker and one of its volunteers argued that I had placed an unreasonable amount of restrictions on the relationship between the foster child in my home and the agency volunteer. They offered suggestions and examples of attributes considered acceptable and expected parent behaviour, while simultaneously identifying the difference in my behaviour when compared to other mothers. The caseworker suggested that I had no need to “know every little thing” that occurred between the foster child and the volunteer. In other words, I was not a flexible and supportive foster mother. The volunteer explained her frustration in having to “constantly check things out” with me as that restriction eliminated the possibility of spontaneity. The level of resistance in working with me as the child’s primary caregiver became more evident as time passed. The community agency caseworker suggested that a social worker at the child welfare agency be the liaison between the community agency representatives and myself. This proposal was intended to facilitate planning activities that required my input but circumventing direct contact with me. The agency caseworker felt the new arrangements would eliminate their interactions with me and therefore reduce any areas of tensions and conflicts. In this way, the agency caseworker and its volunteer who worked with the foster child could contact the child through traditional mails, electronic mails, telephone voice messages left on my mailbox, and direct telephone calls using my telephone number. All this would be done without directly communicating with me, thus effectively rendering me invisible and ultimately silenced as the child’s foster mother and primary caregiver. It is not unusual that challenges would develop among adults attempting to care for and support foster children, however, Susan Whitelaw Downs (1996: 203, 216) argues that these problems appear to increase when Black foster parents are involved; for example, “there is some evidence of a lack of communication between agencies and black foster parents in comparison to whites” (216); These tensions, while frustrating at times, do not deter me from being fully committed to mothering foster children.

Many foster parents love their foster children, worry about them, nurture them, help them with family reunification, and are emotionally attached to them regardless of genetic connections to family's bloodline (Henderson, 2005). However, when I tried to assume my mothering role, practitioners often questioned my legitimacy to make decisions for this non-racialized foster child. For example, a practitioner shared information with the foster child prematurely after a strategy had been agreed upon, claiming that the child was old enough to make her own decision about certain situations. Furthermore, the worker suggested that I was overprotective of the child and that my actions were stifling the child's growth. On other occasions, the agency caseworker and the volunteer devised clandestine operations to help the foster child remain in contact with her former foster mother, another White woman. These attempts undermined my mothering relationship with the foster child and created conflicts between the community agency representatives and myself. Clearly, foster parents are challenged in many ways (Brown and Calder, 1999; Swartz, 2004) but one of the primary areas of resistance occurs around parenting strategies. Child welfare workers and agency personnel constantly challenged my mode of parenting by suggesting that I was too strict, too sensitive to their suggestions and my mothering style was too inflexible so it conflicted with the foster child's personality. During a particular challenging phase of my relationship with the community agency, I was also mothering a 16-year-old, racialized foster child. Many of the same structures and guideline were implemented for this child, yet community agency representatives and child welfare personnel made no negative observations or leveled critique at my mothering style or role. Why would there be such a difference in disapproval that originated from and instigated by primarily White women who unrelentingly challenged my mothering role for non-racialized foster children?

Connecting race and experience

Frequently, community agency representatives used stereotypical labels such as aggressive, argumentative, confrontational, angry, hostile, and uncivilized to describe me in meetings and written communications. This occurred numerous times in the presence of the foster child. To compound the situation, agency personnel have publicly expressed negative characterization of me as an individual, as a parent, foster parent, and as a primary caregiver for a particular non-racialized foster child. During a particularly tense period, the caseworker responded to telephone concerns of the foster child in a letter to the Children's Aid Society representative. She suggested "it is the position of our agency that the foster parent must agree to engage the volunteer and the agency in both a positive and civilized manner in order for this relationship to continue." She further noted her agency's unwillingness to continue in a relationship with me by stating that its volunteer was "...no longer willing to continue without support and civility from Delores." In yet another assault, the case worker argued that the agency "...continued to try to work in an unsupportive, and at

times, hostile home environment...” which impacted the relationship between the foster child and the volunteer. The final expression of White supremacy and White saintly motherhood came when the caseworker refused my many attempts to schedule a meeting with all concerned parties. The caseworker’s response to my attempts to reconvene was met with a refusal and a suggestion that my tone of voice “...was neither apologetic nor conciliatory” so she had “continued concerns as to whether her [my] intention is to mend fences, participate positively and move on.”

My ability to mother as a respite foster parent for children (of any racial background) and for parenting racialized children long-term has never been questioned to my knowledge. My relationship with some of the staff in both the child welfare and community agency resembled that of the proverbial mammy whose mothering role was to nurture and care for White children but was denied decision-making power in caring for the children. I make this reference to Black women’s perceived roles as being suited for domestic work in Canada (Brand, 1999: 174-191; Calliste, 1991: 141-143). This point will be elaborated on later in the paper. In the interim, I continue to expose my experiences with White women practitioners while mothering this non-racialized child.

The racial differences between my family and the foster child created discomfort for some staff and foster parents in the child welfare agency. One child welfare worker couched her discomfort by explaining that my home had become inappropriate given the child’s own discomfort living in a home with racialized (Black) people. Without consulting me, she quickly made arrangement to remove the child from my home and shared detail information of the new foster family with the child. These arrangements would not have been made without the knowledge and approval of senior agency staff. Jason Brown and Peter Calder (1999: 488) note foster parents are often unaware of agency plans and arrangements for foster children until the time of implementation. Similarly, I was unaware of the plans for a change in foster homes until the foster child shared them with me. Fortunately, through a combined effort of a therapist in the community who worked with the child, child welfare agency staff, and me, the child remained in my home until reunification with her kin 12 months later. This question of racial differences between foster children and foster parents is worth further exploration. While that discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, I am challenged by one question. Given that the majority of African Canadian children are placed in foster homes with White parents, what is the child welfare agency’s response when racialized children declare that they prefer to live in homes that are racially compatible with them?

I resist the colonized mothering role “of the mammy—the faithful, obedient domestic servant” (Collins, 2000: 72-73) who takes care of White children but ‘ole har caana—that is, she knows that regardless of her status in the family she remains a mere servant. One community agency case worker admonished me for not being a proper representative of a “professional foster parent.” She wrote: “However, if it is not her intention, or the intention of the Children’s Aid

Society to require her as a professional foster parent, to support and facilitate this match in a positive manner ... we can not continue with the match” (Personal communication, 2005). Veli-Pekka Isomaki (2002) offers a discussion on the possible professionalization of foster parenting which is different from the intended meaning of the agency caseworker. Here like the mammy, the social worker attempted to control the space from which I mother as well as the shape of my mothering, particularly in relation to the White foster child. Based on practitioners’ reaction and their attempts to delegitimize my mothering role, I can only surmise that they were reacting to the Black mother matriarch, the bad mother and the mirror image of the mammy, the good mother (Collins, 2000). The matriarch was not the Canadian government’s vision of Caribbean women who were stereotyped as suited for domestic work and caregiving in particular (Calliste, 1991: 141-143). As a Caribbean immigrant, I remain cognizant that many women of my mother’s generation could only gain entry to Canada as domestic workers even when they were skilled and well-educated. These women assumed the mothering roles in White middle-class women’s homes while those women gravitated toward the paid, formal workforce. The generation of Canadian White children mothered by Black Caribbean women now have their own children. However, it appears that these girls who have grown into women have unchanged expectations of Black women, even those of us who are similar ages and who have surpassed their educational level and social status attainment. Many people continue to perceive Black women as mummies—babysitters and nannies for White middle-class children but lacking the decision-making power of a real mother. In effect, my mothering role is restricted, and to many of the women who harbour these notions of Black mothers, I am a non-entity and ultimately invisible.

White practitioners’ refusal to recognize me as an African Canadian woman mothering White children is problematic. Practitioners often comment that they see a caring foster mother not a Black foster mother. Colour-blindness allows people to think that everyone is the same and helps them to deny the different, often discriminatory experiences of racialized women (O’Brien, 2000: 52-53). This is unproductive and does little to support racialized foster parents who undoubtedly confront racist ideas and actions in their roles as foster parents and mothering in particular. In fact, workers generally ignore or are unaware of the implications of they, themselves or others labeling women like me as being hostile or uncivilized. Furthermore, when White children articulate their discomfort in being placed in racialized foster homes, and being mothered by Black women, workers are unsure of how to help the children address their feelings, and deconstruct the assumptions and stereotypes of Black women mothering White children.

Another area of tension for non-racialized children is the community assumption that they do not belong in some families because they are racially different. When in public with White foster children, frequently, people in my local community erroneously assume that I am the children’s friend, babysit-

ter or the nanny. This assumption is never made when I am with Black or Bi-racial children. This is unlike the experiences of foster parents in Alberta who, according to Bown and Calder, (1999: 488) felt that they were treated as “glorified babysitters.” This is a White middle-class perspective of foster mothering and clearly does not account for race and other social intersections. This position is amplified by Patricia Hill Collins’s (2000) argument that “Black motherhood as an institution is both dynamic and dialectical. Ongoing tensions around motherhood characterize efforts to mold the institution of Black motherhood in order to benefit intersecting marginalization of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation” (176). As African women in the diaspora, we are defining our roles as mothers and refuse to have our mothering roles dictated by men or White women. Clearly, my racial representation is not invisible to community individuals and some children. How then do we account for this colour-blindness among some practitioners?

Practitioners’ colour-blindness affects the relationship between Black foster parents and agency staff; however, it also affects agency training and support. “Foster parents are in need of both education regarding the issues the children in their care face, as well as support in coping with the emotional demands of caregiving” (Kurtz, 2002: 43). While the child welfare agency offers various types of training, the agency’s ability to offer support to racialized foster mothers, like myself, is inadequate. Training does not account for racial differences of foster parents and rarely does it incorporate the centrality of race for racialized foster children. This is not to suggest that issues of diverse concerns are not mentioned; however, racial concerns are not integrated into training and support, unless the workers are themselves racialized persons. Latino foster parents identify the need to have more Latino agency staff in order to minimize the cultural inadequacies that the fostering Latino population experience (Torres, 2004). This argument can be generalized to many racialized population. Inadequate training and support create tensions and misunderstanding in the relationship. In addition, practitioners’ colour-blind approach further exacerbates issues of communication. In spite of these racialized experiences, the literature discussing challenges that foster parents experience generally do not include experiences of racism unless the article is specifically focused on racialized foster parents (Denby and Rindfleisch, 1996) or mothering in the margins. As an African Canadian woman, I am expected to be an unpartnered mother and I am expected to mother Black or Black-biracial children. The combination of mothering without a male counter partner and mothering White children for the state in my home appears to be an anomaly to many White middle class women.

Black women continue to embrace single and unmarried motherhood despite “systemic racism, poverty, and social ostracism” and in so doing assert “their ability to operate outside of patriarchal and heterosexual institutions (Pietsch, 2004: 73). I asserted my ability to mother this particular child for 26 months. During that time, I challenged community agencies, the child’s

biological family, staff at the child welfare agency, community volunteers, other foster parents, her friends' parents, and school teachers as I fought to protect my biological family from hostility, racism, and verbal assaults. During those 26 months, I was the most consistent adult in the child's life; yet agency staff neglected to facilitate a process for me to share information that would have helped the child's kin to better understand her and support her needs during the transition phase. This is especially crucial given that the family member had not lived with the child beyond her fourth birthday, had an inconsistent, estranged, and conflicting relationship with the child for at least 32 months, and had only spent brief times together with the child over an eleven-year time span. Was this an attempt to erase my perceived power in this child's life, to ultimately undress me as a mother and therefore deligitimize my mothering role? My status as a single parent and Black woman occupying and sharing the solitary space reserved for White heterosexual married women confronts and renders the status quo defunct. Erica Lawson (2000) states that "the idealized expression of sexuality, reproduction and motherhood are anchored within the institutions of marriage and the nuclear family structure (23)." I do not fit into the accepted categorization of woman and mother. Furthermore, my role in mothering White children for the state when these White mothers are deemed incompetent serves as a further insult to White women who constantly challenged my mothering role for these children. Here lies the conflict—how can my presence as a mother be legitimized and I be freely endowed with the decision-making power for White children when I am branded illegitimate, similar to my mother's generation who were used to serve the needs of the nation as domestic workers, nannies, and babysitters and then discarded?

Conclusion

In spite of the challenges to my role in mothering White children, I remain on the frontlines fighting to claim my space as a mother in all its complexities. My mother was and remains my most ardent teacher and role model in this regard. I have a responsibility to continue carving out a space for her grandchildren and ensuring that the space I create remains for future generations of Black mothers.

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rhythm methods & watery melodies

sour apples for pie in a basket
plucked from a tree far from the farmhouse
& under the tree, a blanket
a cover in the wind, sweet solitude
of an afternoon alone

& young joany dancing
her dress swirling high
both knees beautiful still
& love in her eyes

ten years later, young still
& ducks on the water
the blue on their backs shining out
from her seven little children
through grandma joan's dark eyes
their circles pooling
laughter from the beach

there would be days like that, days when hearing laughter from around the kitchen table meant a game of euchre or crib & danger was as far away as the beach & the ducks & the heat.

but children can neither measure time nor distance & how could I have known that for a teen, a half hour's walk was all it'd take to reach the sand & trees that led to that welcoming beach & the warm august waters of the ottawa? how

could I have known that throughout my teens I'd spend my years sitting at the kitchen table helping grandma joan with schoolwork so different from my own? her upgrading elementary through high school & on to business college while I juggled her learning & my own? I even learned shorthand, which I promptly replaced with the sweet scent of love in my eyes.

& the sweet scent swelled with my first born, graham. walked to the hospital with my suitcase in hand – happy and excited. the hospital was french & catholic & the nuns tried to make me wear an old tin ring on the wedding finger, so I made like I couldn't understand french. but they knew I could & they called me madame this & madame that, as if that would wed me in time.

my labour was induced. the baby's head was too big, the doctor said, & I walked the halls, clinging to handles & bright lights & facing the pain on my own. nurses changed shifts three times that day before my baby was born & a nurse took him away while the sweet smell of life was as fresh as the memory of my own birth, his body my heart. I wanted to breast feed, I told her & she made like she didn't understand english & told me, go to sleep. rest. in french. & then in english brought a bottle & formula after baby was wiped down & dressed & wrapped. we had no visitors all the days we were there. I called my aunty when baby was born & went back to my bed to sleep.

it took grandma joan a long time to warm up to graham. wasn't long adoring him once she warmed up, but it was the warming up that took a while. she was bound & determined I'd do it on my own. you chose this path, she said. now live with it.

thing is, I loved my new path & live with my baby I did. a prouder mom couldn't exist & what I really wanted was to share my joy. yes, when he was born he looked like a cross between diefenbaker & mr. magoo &, yes, his head was very large, but me, I took bus rides in the city just to face him out from my belly so's old ladys could coo & caw at him. I'd sit on park benches & front steps & go down the street house by house, only later learning that's not really how things are done in the city. my boy was born while the thunder reached down from snow clouds & onto this place that was unfamiliar to us – a city. we'd grown to know one another in a quieter place.

but, there we were nonetheless & we didn't stay long in that city. I'd been at carleton, on a scholarship, culture shocked & taking math. these were the days before computers & a single mom couldn't get a student loan in ontario. could in alberta, though.

right about the time I started helping grandma joan with her homework – when I was twelve or thirteen – I learned about chinooks in school. I was

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both fascinated & didn't believe it for a minute. so, up we packed, me and my baby boy, & moved to calgary. wasn't there two weeks when I found I couldn't get a student loan for two years. didn't care. never looked back.

& though I longed for my homeland
for water & bear & sand
there's a breathlessness about the prairie
that opened up my life
like a basket of sweet red apples
under a late summer tree
the white of my hair
against the bark of the green of the tree

her sleep, her dreams still in her speech

I had a hysterectomy at twenty-six. on april fools day. I had to go in the night before & I woke up the next morning with a little stuffed dog by my ice chip cup. the dog looked like a coyote & said something like, thought it was your birthday, eh? well, the weather's going to change & you'd better head for the hills before you lose count of your marbles.

it was a while before I realized I was dreaming or in & out of a drug-induced fog & when I did wake up, the little stuffed dog was gone but her eyes were still there, hovering next to the ice chips. I ignored them & got up to pee.

their yellow eyes
like the yellow of their lives
settling on the backs of the hills
their voices magnified
by their songs
ancient & profound
& always
always
far
too short

try writing that kind of silence onto a page, said those eyes as I was rolled to the operating room that day.

before the hysterectomy, I'd gone through five months of constant illness after baby steven was born. d&c after three months – placenta left behind. staph

infection on top of the one I already had & my uterus got eaten from the inside out. my body formed myself around my bones & as the infection faded & the colour returned to my life, there I sat in a hospital room on april fools morning – coyote's eyes still on me – all drugged & waiting for a room full of masked strangers to make me into an old lady.

empty spaces between the words
their longing for another time
another moment alone
inside blood & bones
& odours of my own
four moontimes
hush little baby
grandmother's
wisdom's
song

where will my sleepy moon be?
under the covers or lost by a tree?
how will I know?
where will I go?

where will my weepy moon be?
will she visit at dawn by the water?
will she help wipe my tears in the spring?

& my angry moon?
where will she be?
will she orbit me now,
her new moon side
showing her face
in the night of my days,
chilling my bones
& my light?

& what of my creative moon?
where will she be?
will she still wait for me
under a tree?
will she visit my dreams
& my quiet at home?
will she call me granddaughter
me?

& I was reminded of a time long before. by twenty-six, lying on that hospital bed, I felt old – certainly older than twenty-one, when I was faced with the decision to end a pregnancy.

the funny thing was, everything started up on april fools day that time too. a woman I'd worked with was getting married – out of town & chinooking. warm. sunny. & a brother of hers who thought I looked like a dream come true. my dark hair. my blue eyes.

I don't remember what he looked like, but when he invited me into the back of his stationwagon, the sun shining in on us like honey & dew – after years of no sex, what could a young woman do?

a couple weeks later, this strange man showed up where I worked. stood at the counter & bellowed out my name between his blonde moustache & beard & before I reached the counter he said, we believe you have contracted gonorrhoea & we'll need the names of all your sexual partners for the past six months. right in front of everyone – in front of the old scottish ladys I worked with – ladys in their fifties!

no one spoke to me about it. not me or anyone else. I simply walked through the returning cold and snow – every lunch hour – the sixteen blocks, then back, to press a button twice for venereal disease & I waited my turn for a needle in the butt the size of a juice glass. days down the road I encountered my first penicillin-fertile yeast infection.

movement in my belly
holding on to life
with a touch so soft
so tender

& creator's tiniest babes
their sacrifices
grandmothering manys a young woman
into blossoms
grieving their losses
alone

as spring unfolded herself around my womb, I found out I was carrying another child, my fertile body's simple joy forming her features into my pores, my body's odour a flower waiting to open around herself in the middle of a tree.

but none of this was meant to be. there were complications. there were signs & a d&c was ordered & there I sat in a hospital room remembering april fools

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afternoon & a chinook arch that pulled the prairie to the depths of my me.

had grandma joan known she may have disowned me. but I didn't tell her. I couldn't, & grandma joan ended up nursing me. she knew I'd had a d&c, like the others I'd have down the road, but an abortion?

& coyote was right there on the bed
her yellow eyes resting on the edge
of my pillow
licking the salt from my tears

a comic irony, she said
as grandma joan brought tea biscuits & tea
& changed the pillow case
under my grief-stained & watery head

tiny spruce & thunderbird eggs

birds whose voices open patterns in the trees
their yellows & greens & red-tipped wings
settling like pollen on the ground
filling the pathways through the trees
with echoes of their songs

last night I dream of three birds, each of them a replica of the next. the first is a small songbird who flies into the house through the open door. the bird is colourful, her feathers a crazy quilt of brilliant yellows & reds, oranges & greens, purples & blues.

grandma joan is in the next room, her fear of birds frozen in her arms. so, though I long to listen longer to the songbird's song, I lead her back out through the open door. no sooner does that songbird leave than in walks a prairie hen looking like she's quilled & quilted with the same splashes of colour, her wings wiggling & her bottom bouncing as she makes her way towards the kitchen – her toes click-clicking on the hardwood floor.

then barb walks in the door. barb, who travelled twice the distance to be with me, her black hair thick & delicate, her round crown circling her perfect tiny head, & her hands the flutter of butterflies, flying through town to announce her birth. brother held her first, his little boy wings brushing, touching her face, her hair, her hands. the look in his eyes – a knowing from the spirit world – reflected into mine as he passed his sister in a breeze so gentle, his scent her sweet protection, for life.

barb's my baby still, now with children of her own. in the dream she tells me,
mom, don't put that bird outside. I saved her from the zoo. but the bird is gone
& framed in the doorway – the sunshine bright against the deepest reaches of
a chinook arch – is my little birdy-girl, my granddaughter jessinia, holding a
small stuffed crazy-quilted bird.

look, nokomis, look, she says. I got her at the zoo. her name is great grandma
joan & she likes tea biscuits & fresh, hot tea. & up comes a wind only the prairie
can bring, sand rushing through the open door like fog over water.

sand in my throat
& songs that coax the ancient ones
to their homeland
& still, after all these years
that moment I looked into barb's eyes
her looking into mine
I knew she knew me too
& jessinia, born eyes wide open
hers looking into mine

we three are
trees inside the rain
each round drop surrounded by the sound
of mother

The Experiences of Mothers of Children of Mixed Heritage *The Theme of the “Body Physical”*

This article springs from research I conducted (2001) on the experiences of mothers whose children of mixed heritage were attending elementary school in southern Ontario, Canada. Using feminist research methodologies, I explored what role, if any, their children’s mixed ethnicity had played in their mothering and in their children’s elementary school experiences. In the literature written by mothers of children of mixed heritage, there is often an undeniable emphasis on the physical body, with a particular focus on bodily differences arising from ethnicity. When mother and child physically appear to belong to different ethnic backgrounds, mothers write of their tangled emotions. Thus, being mixed or giving birth to mixed children may bring about a uniquely heightened awareness of the body as body and facial parts are analyzed and examined for the interplay of genetic blends. Participants in this study similarly recounted stories that were rooted in the world of the body. Mothers discussed facial features, skin tones, hair colour, and how each particular child looked, for example, “more Canadian” or “more Latin.” This study also suggests that multiracial individuals experience the concept of physical attractiveness in dramatically different ways because images of mixed ethnic identity, robust health and illicit sexual allure are jumbled together in the eyes of the beholder. Participants recounted lived experiences of this stereotype while simultaneously experiencing that surge of maternal pride that has been felt by many mothers of all backgrounds—monocultural, multiracial, or otherwise—whenever her child receives a compliment.

“Are you in the kitchen or the living room?”

I looked down at my feet. One foot rested on the wooden floor of the living room while the second was on the linoleum of the kitchen.

“Both. I’m in both.” (Walters, 1998: 114)

Using feminist research methodologies, I conducted a study (Gormley, 2001)

on the experiences of mothers whose children of mixed heritage were attending elementary school in southern Ontario, Canada. For the purposes of this study, the term “feminist research methodologies” referred to research that benefits women. “What makes a qualitative or quantitative approach feminist is a commitment to finding women and their concerns” (DeVault, 1999: 30). In this mothering research, I explored, among other questions, what role, if any, their children’s mixed ethnicity had played in their mothering and in their children’s elementary school experiences. I discovered that the physical body was a theme that appeared frequently both in the literature on individuals of mixed heritage and in my research; thus, the central argument of this article is that the multiracial experience is often viewed through the lens of the Physical Body. I begin my discussion by acknowledging my close personal stance to the topic. Then I provide details on the research design of my study and refer to the criteria used when selecting participants and to the plethora of terms used by others when referring to multiracial children. A synopsis of my literature review is then presented, which demonstrates that mothers who write on this topic place an undeniable emphasis on the physical body by reflecting upon, comparing and contrasting body parts. Participants in this study similarly recounted stories that are intertwined with the concepts of robust health, desirability, and physical attractiveness. I next delve into the uneasy connection between “mixed blood” and stereotypes of unbridled and illicit sex. Finally, I conclude that giving birth to or being an individual of mixed heritage brings about a unique awareness of the human body.

I was drawn to this topic for mainly personal reasons. As the mother of two sons of Asian/Caucasian mixed heritage, my interest in this subject arose from my most innermost feelings for my children: the desire to help them to thrive in their world. I wanted this study to lead me towards a deeper appreciation of our experiences (both mine and my children’s) as they go through the school system; therefore, I hoped that, at some level, my fuller understanding would help to strengthen our mother-child bond. This topic also appealed to me because of my personal lived experience of complex identities. While I look, sound, and have a family name that is completely Irish Canadian, through my Mexican mother I have another identity—that of *mexicana*—a fact that some of my teachers, I recall, had trouble believing.

The study involved a total of 12 individual interviews of approximately two hours in length and participants were middle-class, educated women. Except for one non-mother who was mixed heritage herself and who volunteered to shed insights on the experience, all other participants were mothers. Participants’ marital status was not given prominence in the interviews, but there were three married women, two separated (almost divorced) women, one widow, and one single non-mother. In all of the unions, at least one partner was White (either White North American or White European). Four White men and three White women were among the unions. The non-White partners were Black, Latin, and Asian. It was not my intention to have a sample of unions

in which at least one partner was White; it just happened that way because the composition of this group was determined by the participants who were available to me for this study. All of the mothers had children in the public elementary school system enrolled in the regular schooling stream. No private or religious schools were represented in the sample.

Determining just who exactly qualified as a mother of children of mixed heritage was somewhat difficult to decide. Certainly, numerous studies have different definitions (Chiong, 1998; Schwartz, 1998a, 1998b). In my study, however, I looked for mixed heritage or multiracial experiences in which there was (a) the union of two or more races according to the traditional racial definitions of Blacks, Whites, Asians, First Nations, Aboriginal peoples, etc., and /or (b) the union of two or more different language groups. So according to my categories, a Black Canadian father with a White Canadian mother would be mixed, even if they both speak the same English language; and a Spanish-speaking Costa Rican mother and a German-speaking Austrian father would be mixed, even if society classified both as "White."

I also needed to decide what term to use to describe the children. "Children of mixed heritage" is the term that I finally decided to use the most frequently for those children who are often referred to in the current literature as "multiracial," "biracial," "interracial," "mixed," "mixed-race," or sometimes "multicultural." The term "heritage" has multiple usages in the postcolonial literature, but in this study, I limited its meaning to the ethnic background of an individual or his/her family. In the literature on the multiracial experience, such children are also occasionally described as "mixed heritage" because each biological parent is from an ethnic background different from the other parent. There are countless other ways to describe such persons including "betwixt and between," "blended," "cosmic," "half-caste," "interethnic," "melded," "multiethnic," "mixed ancestry," "mixed lineage," "mixed parentage," "a new people," "transnational," "transracial" (Fernandez, 1992; Gailey, 2000; Nieto, 1996; Root, 1992; Schwartz 1998a; Tizard and Phoenix, 1993, to name a few). Scholar Rishma Dunlop (1999) delves into a challenging analysis of the hidden complexities of such labeling identities. However, with the permission from my participants who were comfortable using this "label," I employed this term mainly because it was a convenient way to convey ethnic background information to the reader.

When conducting a literature review on mothers of children of mixed heritage, I found that there is an undeniable emphasis on the physical body. To elaborate, there is no physical space less distanced than that of a child spending nine months in his/her mother's womb. The title of the article *Bearing Blackness in Britain*, exploring Blacks' attitudes towards White mothers of mixed Black/White children, recognizes the profound physical attachment of carrying a multiracial child in utero (Twine, 2000). For mothers who were once united by an umbilical cord to their children of mixed heritage, this link takes on a dramatic role as body and facial parts are analyzed and examined

for the interplay of genetic blends. The writings of both mothers and children (now adults) are frequently based in reflections on their physical appearances, entranced by the differences or similarities of the corporeal aspects of their heritage. Of course, many mothers in single-heritage unions are enthralled with the physical make-up of the new being that has come forth from their bodies (counting toes, determining who the child resembles, being pleased if we “see ourselves in her,” etc.). However, being mixed or giving birth to mixed children may bring about a uniquely heightened awareness of the body. One such mother describes her dizzying fascination with looking at and staring at children of mixed heritage:

I see the features that I associate with one race, and then I see sometimes these features slip into the features I associate with the “other” race. Each time the image slips from one race to the other, I know I’ve lost at least half of it, and so I need to keep looking, for what? Am I waiting for some amorphous homeostatic moment when the images will coalesce as neither this nor that but something else entirely? (Marín, 1996: 113)

The mixed heritage physical body exerts its power over mothers’ and children’s emotions. Jennifer Morales (1996), white appearing yet a quarter Filipina, a quarter Mexican, and one half northern European, writes that her blond-haired, fair-skinned children pose a special challenge to her. Her life goal is to teach them that as multi-racial individuals, they “have the ability and responsibility to move back and forth across the lines of race” (47) in spite of their appearance of single-race heritage. This mother’s reflections are among the most outspoken in revealing how skin colour as the route to racial and gender privilege is a prime motivator in determining her mothering style. Yolanda Flores Niemann (1996) writes that her biracial son’s colouring: light skin, blond hair, green eyes contrasted with her olive skin and caused people to often ask if she was the family maid or nanny. Once again, the emphasis is on how the mother’s and the child’s bodies differ from each other.

Lynda Marín (1996), herself a mixed product of a “smoky dark brown-armed” Nicaraguan father and an Anglo-American mother, “felt genuinely troubled that every bit of the Latino seemed to have disappeared in one generation” (115) when her infant son was born surprisingly dissimilar to her. A mother of a single-heritage union might also feel shocked if her child were born, say red-headed amongst a family who weren’t. However, such a mother probably would not feel bereft, and would not grieve her child losing part of its maternal ethnic heritage. In contrast to my above fictional mother, Marín looked down at her “brown hands [which] stood out in stark relief against the unmistakable pallor of his [her baby’s] tiny tummy, fingers, face.... When his first hair grew in golden, I felt disoriented” (114). Her disequilibrium, she reflects, was due to the fact that “her racial anchoring in brownness” (115) was

floundering in the rocky seas of anxiety “as if I were not really who I thought I was” (115)—a woman in turmoil because how could she still be Latin if she had been the conduit for a white child?

Another mother writes of the surprise she received when her son of mixed Japanese/Anglo-American was born looking nothing like her:

He was nine pounds seven ounces, twenty-three inches and about as far from an Asian baby as a baby can get: red hair, blue eyes, just the faintest golden suggestion of eyebrows and eyelashes, and porcelain-white skin. (Genetics is a strange thing: the woman in the labour room next to mine was half Japanese, and her husband was white. When I saw their baby, I was astonished: He looked completely Japanese, with fuzzy black hair, large, almond-shaped brown eyes, and tawny skin). (Butcher, 1996: 17)

Perceived physical similarities and differences between the child’s body and the mother’s body play a unique role in the relationship between mothers and children of mixed heritage. Of course, when any mother gives birth to a son, there is much difference between their bodies. The “beautiful, basically gender-neutral child” is then transformed into “It’s a boy” (Koppelman, 1999: 90). However, the mixed race literature that I reviewed focused especially on the bodily differences arising from ethnicity. Many mother-authors reflect on the deep love and hope they hold for their children, while simultaneously writing about their comparisons of each other’s bodily characteristics, facial features, and skin tones. In the literature reviewed, the physical connection between mother and child is celebrated and tangled by many emotions.

Participants in this study similarly recounted a few stories that were rooted in the world of the body. By analyzing the interview data, I discovered a number of themes, but one surfaced particularly frequently, that is, the Body Physical, which exerts its effect on people of mixed heritage from babyhood through elementary school and onwards through adulthood. (I purposefully placed the adjective after the noun “body” as a way to emphasize “physical.”) The mothers in my study discussed facial features, skin tones, hair colour, and how each particular child looked “more Canadian” or “more Latin.”

Elena¹, a Uruguayan participant married to a White Canadian, joked that her blonde-haired, blue-eyed daughter looked more Swedish than Latin, and yet this confident, vivacious little girl might surprise many people in the future whenever she would start speaking Spanish (Interview, August 18, 2000). Gaby (from Mexico) mentioned that even though her daughter was very fair, her thinking was “very Mexican” as a result of their spending so much time together. Another mother, Margaret, was trying to de-emphasize society’s preoccupation with the body, but found that sometimes other people (usually friendly strangers) would be puzzled by their contrasting physical images.

But when we go to stores and that, because we look so different, everyone remarks. A lot of people first-hand say, "Oh, she's not your daughter, is she?"...And then we explain. "Her father is from Honduras and that's why her skin is darker. That's why she has dark eyes." (Interview, July 31, 2000: 3)

Children of every racial and cultural group are beautiful and certainly single-heritage children are very beautiful. However, this study suggests that multiracial children and their mothers experience the concept of physical beauty in unique and complex ways. Some mothers in my study talked about the attention that their children received (and continue to receive) because of their perceived "good looks" and also, occasionally, because of their good health. They reported "an exaggerated emphasis on physical appearance" (Bradshaw, 1992: 77) and the fact that "this increased attention to physical appearance is expressed in such labels as *exotic, beautiful, or fascinating*" (77, emphasis in original).

Cynthia L. Nakashima (1992) states that this "seemingly positive image is actually very complex and needs to be questioned and studied very carefully" (169) and Carla K. Bradshaw (1992) argues that "it can lead to the feeling of being an outsider in some situations" (77). They look at the historical reasons behind the perceived beauty associated with individuals of mixed heritage and offer the possibility that "the idea that multiracials are attractive might very well be connected to the stereotype ... that they are ... vulnerable and linked to unbridled and illicit sex" (Nakashima, 1992: 170).

Nakashima and Bradshaw have raised a worthwhile point. If this stereotype is analyzed in further depth, highly complex historical and sociological reasons may emerge for the development and prevalence of this stereotype. Nevertheless, the participants in my study, including me, viewed the compliments that our children had received as contributing positively to their overall sense of self-esteem, and I am filled with pride whenever I am told that my children are handsome. Beth, a participant in my study, talked of the many compliments her Black/White daughters receive because of their beauty. I also talked about my mothering experiences of multi-racial beauty.

When they were babies, they got it all the time and I figured it was because they were babies, but it never stopped. We were at the zoo one Sunday and I had a lady come up to me and said "Are these your daughters?" And I said, "Yes" and she said "They're absolutely stunning" and I said, "Thank you very much." And as they have gotten older, it hasn't changed. People have never stopped saying it, or appreciating them, or seeing them for what they are, which is so nice. (Beth, interview, July 26, 2000: 2-3)

When we were living in Taiwan, people would cross the street just to look at Joseph because they were so curious about a mixed race child. Then they

would say to me “Oh, what a beautiful child.” And it was all positive, so he felt confident about himself—he knew he was cute. But then he would hate it whenever these strangers would come over and try to touch him, pat his head. Then he would be very rude to them. (Louise, interview, July 12, 2000: 9)

Margaret, the mother of a mixed Estonian/Honduran daughter, reflected on her “beautiful, Hispanic-looking girl” and then described her encounter with another family of mixed heritage:

There is an Estonian children’s camp—a summer camp. I just went there yesterday. In that camp, there was one mixed family—an Estonian man with a Guyanese wife. My sister and I were together. We’re in our 40s. We were just looking at the kids. Estonian children are beautiful, but they’re all really fair-haired, really fair. And then the three children of the mixed heritage family were dark. They looked so different in a good way. The father, when he was young, we used to call him “mousy.” No one would ever call his two boys “mousy.” My sister said they looked so virile, even though they’re aged twelve and thirteen. (Interview, July 31, 2000: 12)

Margaret’s sister, by describing the “mousy” man’s sons as looking “virile,” has referred to “perhaps the most common and most constant offshoot of the biological-psychological profile of people of mixed race” (Nakashima, 1992: 168), which is a focus on their sex appeal. Citing historical images of extremely passionate half-breeds, Nakashima (1992) analyzes possible factors that have created this impression.

A ... possible factor in this stereotype is that multiracial people are physical reminders of the biological nature of sex and love. No stories about storks delivering babies can explain how a “Black-looking” baby can have a White or Asian mommy, or how a Eurasian can look like an Asian person with blond hair and blue eyes. The genetics of reproduction are, as they say, written all over the faces of mixed-race people. (168).

In my interview with Caroline, a young woman in her 20s, the non-mother, who describes herself as “mulatto,” we talked briefly about the 40-page Zellers Department Store advertising supplement in that weekend’s *Saturday Star* newspaper (Interview, August 3, 2000). Out of a total of 36 models (including children, teenagers, and adults), eleven appeared mixed. This would account for a whopping 31 percent of the people portrayed! Of course it would not be easy to know with any certainty the ethnic background of these fashion models. However, we were both in agreement that certain individuals looked

“Latin mixed with something else,” or “Afro-Asian,” or “Eurasian,” etc. It was obvious to us that the advertising agency that produced this brochure considered it a good idea to employ numerous models of mixed heritage to promote the products. Later on in the interview, I asked Caroline whether beauty had played a role in her life.

When I was just born, and when I was a toddler, and a little child growing up, my mother in particular was warned that she'd have to guard me more closely because I'd be the apple of everybody's eye. I'd be the desire of you know, every man. That kind of jeopardized my mother's confidence. She wants me to be accepted, and appreciated and this and that. But she doesn't want that everywhere I turn, people are after me. (Interview, August 3, 2000: 6)

Caroline's “exotic” beauty as a child of mixed heritage “jeopardized her mother's confidence” and caused her much worry. Caroline talked of her perceived beauty being simultaneously a blessing and a burden in her life. As a multiracial woman, she faces challenges that are intertwined with race and gender, since numerous images of females who are “half-breed” Indian, Mexican “mestiza,” “mulatta,” or “Eurasian,” are centred on fantasies of erotic lust (Nakashima, 1992). Such images are a jumble of mixed bloods, desirability, and vulnerability—the latter because historically such women often were weak in a social, political, and economic sense. “Because of the structure of power in the American gender system (as well as in many other gender systems), weakness and vulnerability can be very exciting and attractive when applied to females” (Nakashima, 1992: 169).

Interestingly, around the time of my data collection, *The Toronto Star* ran a series of articles on multiracialism (Infantry, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). Images of 12 children of mixed heritage appeared in the individual and group photographs that accompanied the articles. Subtitled beneath one large photo was: “This is what Canadian looks like” (2000c). The children are favourably described as “almond shaped eyes and freckled cheeks” (K1); “delicate features and mocha skin” (K3); “black [but] with lengthy, spiraling tresses” (K1). A teenager of mixed Indian/German heritage responds to these articles in a Letter to the Editor about the “the changing face of tradition and culture” (Khurana, 2000). *The Toronto Star* chooses to photograph her, thus making her letter the only one that day to be accompanied by an image of the writer's facial features. They headline it: “Mixed: A Beautiful Word,” as if finally answering the always burning question of “*what do multiracial children really look like?*” I agree with the headline: the children and teenagers pictured are all very beautiful, and as a mother of two mixed-heritage boys, I am more pleased than dismayed that the *Toronto Star* has reinforced the stereotype that children of mixed heritage are “aesthetically appealing.” At the same time, I am also uncomfortable with the idea that beauty is something that can be assessed by a journalist, authorized

by a newspaper editor, and then perpetuated by a wide customer distribution. Perhaps *The Toronto Star*, like all media, has put onto paper what already is often thought about in our beauty-driven society. “The idea that multiracial people are beautiful and handsome is one of the most persistent and commonly accepted stereotypes, both historically and contemporary ... people of mixed race have become ‘known’ for having attractive physical appearances” (Nakashima, 1992: 170-171).

A spin-off of this stereotype is that multiracial children’s bodies are unusually salubrious and robust. Recognizing that it is a hypothesis that has never actually been medically proven, Margaret joked about the idea that certain genetic blends tend to lead to physical strength and vitality:

...Even animals—I know animals are animals. But don’t you see thoroughbreds—like a thoroughbred horse or a thoroughbred dog—even though they’re both so fine and so cherished, they’re more susceptible and vulnerable to disease and germs, whereas a mongrel is not so easily sick [Margaret is laughing good-naturedly and joking as she explains this]. I’ve heard many times with humans, an interracial child is supposedly stronger physically.... Like Liz, she doesn’t eat all that well, and I don’t give her supplements and hopefully, she’ll stay healthy. It’s funny—she’s never sick. Her sickness—it’s only for a day or two and that’s it. (Margaret, interview, August 10, 2000: 11)

Unfortunately, my children have had their fair share of coughs, colds, ear infections, and a wide variety of other common childhood ailments, so they do not possess this particular “advantage” of being genetically mixed. Margaret spoke of numerous people commenting to her on the healthy and athletic nature of mixed heritage children. Thus, she described another perception related to the physical nature of multiracial individuals.

Margaret raised good points that need to be addressed, such as her criticism of the emphasis on race as a defining characteristic of an individual. She pointed out that society remains overly-driven by outward appearances: “It is so physical, in the body ... maybe we’re making a mountain out of a molehill. For me, mixed children are not that different from others” (Interview, August 10, 2000: 10).

As stated earlier, children of every racial and cultural group are beautiful—I write that sincerely. But multiracial individuals experience the concept of physical attractiveness in dramatically different ways—images of mixed ethnic identity, robust health and illicit sexual allure are jumbled together in the eyes of the beholder (Bradshaw, 1992; Nakashima, 1992). Participants and I recounted lived experiences of this stereotype while simultaneously experiencing that surge of maternal pride that has been felt by many mothers of all backgrounds—monocultural, multiracial, or otherwise—whenever her child receives a compliment. According to this study, giving birth to mixed children

or being mixed brings about a uniquely dizzying awareness of the body, because such a mother will often compare her body (and her ethnic identity) to that of her child. As my participants' stories suggest, mothers and their children of mixed heritage experience the Body Physical in particularly unique ways.

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¹Participants are identified with pseudonyms.

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Postcards from the Middle

The Journey of Transracial Adoption

This paper highlights some of the mothering issues revealed through our conversations with our participants, White parents of Asian children, a group to which we belong. Current literature suggests that dominant discourse in Canada is that the country is egalitarian and celebrates diversity and multiculturalism. As a result, only overt instances of racism are identified as such. While some mothers in our study subscribed to this discourse prior to adopting transracially, most experienced a growing awareness of the model minority concept and understood its negative implications. Having adopted transracially, some mothers are learning, either for the first time or more deeply, about the privileges of being White as they are taken to places typically difficult to access before becoming a multiracial family. Participants in our study also described how their children were living in between two worlds—in between White and Chinese communities. When a person is positioned between two cultures, this tensioned space can be (interpreted as) a lonely existence. By extension, we are positioned in the space in between as we (re)consider our identities as mothers and as adoptive mothers.

Race may only be skin-deep biologically (Rothman, 2005) but its effects on how a person is treated in society go to one's very core. Our wonderful, at times heart-breaking, but always rewarding, experiences of being mothers of children adopted transracially brought us together and, influenced by our love of research, have impelled us to be reflective of our and others' actions and motivations (Gidluck and Dwyer, 2006). Our (evolving) views on the intersection of race, adoption, and mothering led us to conduct our own study. This paper highlights some of the mothering issues revealed through our conversations with our participants, White parents of Asian children, a group to which we belong.

We begin with our observations of the social construction of what it means to mother and to be a citizen in one's adoptive country. This is followed by themes of the topics discussed by our participants: racism, the model minority concept, White privilege, and the children's position of being between two cultures. Adopting transracially compels us to challenge dominant discourse.

“Where is she from?” An early postcard

At the beginning of our work together, we focused on the social construction of birth and adoptive mothers (Dwyer and Gidluck, 2004). Over coffee we would compare questions we were asked or comments said to us: “Do you have any children of your own?” “Now that you've adopted, you're sure to get pregnant.” We realized that these comments and questions “perpetuate a socially held myth that adoption is a second-best and less-than alternative for all involved—that in being part of an adoption one has somehow missed out on a ‘real’ family experience” (Johnston, 2004: 3). This myth is an extension of the “hierarchy” of motherhood that provides status to certain “types” of mothers.

As Dee Paddock (2002) pointed out, “Many people who have not experienced adoption personally view us as having ‘failed’ in an important cultural way. We have failed to create a family that falls within the narrow definition of ‘normal’” (2). When we are viewed as “not normal,” by extension our children are viewed as “not normal.” Consequently, qualifiers are often used to refer to our children—“This is Lynn's adopted daughter,” “Sonya has a daughter who's adopted from China”—in situations where they would not dream of doing so in a non-adoptive family: “This is Sue's birth-control-failure son,” “This is Mary's caesarean-section daughter,” “This is Nancy's in-vitro son” (Johnston, 2004).

After realizing that because we chose to create our families through adoption that we were typically viewed by others as adoptive mothers rather than mothers, we explored the role of race in our experiences. We acknowledged that as mothers of children who are not of the same race, it appears obvious to others that our children are adopted, however, we didn't understand why this prompts strangers to ask questions about our daughters' origins: “Where is she from?” We began to talk to each other about the issue of race in conceptions of motherhood and how language contributes to our feeling of being on public display. We were surprised by the amount and types of questions we were asked as we shopped for groceries or ate in restaurants.

As Cheri Register (2001) points out, people ask personal questions only in situations they perceive as abnormal. Recently Sonya's four-year-old answered a stranger's question “Where are you from?” with “The Dwyer family.” Questions like this one led us to understand that our children will always be confronted with what Frank Wu (2002) calls “the perpetual foreigner syndrome” (79). Most citizens who have spent the majority of their lives in Canada would probably not answer their birth country either and say a

certain city or area of a city but our children are expected to say “*China*.” We continue to be surprised how some people demonstrate that the experiences of our children, and therefore, our experiences as mothers, should be public knowledge. As their mothers, we are expected to disclose personal information about our children’s lives before they came to be part of our families. We’re left to feel “rude” if we choose to ignore insensitive or prying questions or provide answers that aren’t what they hoped.

Strangers typically do not ask birth mothers how long their labour was or how painful, but we are frequently asked how long we waited and whether it was expensive. We, and our children, have the same need for and right to privacy as other people (Coughlin and Ambramowitz, 2004). But we are expected to “know what they mean....”

P. S. You know what I mean?

We are working up the courage to answer “We’re from just over the street” when asked “Where is she from?” but we’ve been socialized to be polite—further puzzling us why others didn’t learn to not ask intrusive questions. When we don’t answer these types of questions as expected, we get “You know what I mean.”

Wu (2002), an Asian American law professor, reminds us that it is not just transracial families that face these kinds of intrusive and insensitive questions, but all people of colour. He says he is often treated as if he’s being silly if he replies: “I was born in Cleveland, and I grew up in Detroit.” Quite often, he suggests, answers like this are followed by the question: “Where are you *really* from?” (80, emphasis in original). He suggests that these types of questions imply that he is “a visitor at best, an intruder at worst” and that “people who know nothing about [him] have an expectation of ethnicity as if [he] will give up [his] life story as an example of exotic” (80).

We typically try to use positive adoption language when we do, in fact, know what they mean. As we each have two daughters, both of whom were adopted from China, we are often asked “Are they sisters?” or more frequently “Are they real sisters?” When we answer “yes,” some people express their amazement that we were able to adopt two children from the same birth family. Sometimes we answer, “They are real sisters but they are not biological sisters” hoping they get the message. But we hear their message loud and clear; since both girls are adopted by the same parents but are not viewed as “real sisters,” we are being told that we are not viewed as their “real” mother.

Certainly, the discourse of mothering doesn’t have to exclude us. We *were* “expecting” while we waited for our babies; we *do* have “children of our own” (we just didn’t give birth to them), we *are* our children’s “real” mothers, and our daughters *are* “real” sisters. And we did not settle for “second” best in choosing adoption as the way to grow our families. The love that binds us to our children is as “real” and as “strong” as if we had physically given birth to them.

It was these personal reflections as mothers that led us to explore other parents' experiences. Specifically, we wanted to know about their experiences around the issues of race, racism, and racial identity. We developed five overarching questions: 1) What does the concept of race mean to you? 2) Did adoption affect your "racial awareness" and/or conceptualizations of race? If so, how? 3) Has your family experienced racism and if so, what strategies have been effective in combating this discrimination? 4) Do you have specific strategies for promoting healthy racial identity development? 5) Are there resources available to assist you and your family in combating discrimination and promoting healthy racial identity development? If so, do these resources meet the needs of transracial families? If they do not meet your needs, what type of programming would be most beneficial to you?

We recruited participants from across the country using primarily the internet and newsletters of adoption agencies and associations. We were pleased by the interest expressed by others, many of whom appear to be grappling with the same issues as us.

Talking to others on the journey: Methodology

Participants were parents who identified as White and who have adopted at least one child from Asia. Six focus groups were conducted with a total of 32 parents participating of which 27 were females. Twenty-nine had adopted from China, three had adopted their children from Vietnam (one participant had adopted children from China and Vietnam), and one adopted a child from South Korea.

Data was collected from three sources: a questionnaire (which included demographic information such as age, socio-economic status, and other family characteristics), written comments from the last section of the questionnaire, and focus group interviews. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire at the beginning of the focus group. This was to allow for demographic information to be shared privately with the researchers. Written open-ended questions were provided at the end of the focus groups to provide parents with the opportunity to elaborate on issues privately that they may not have felt comfortable doing in the group.

Hermeneutic phenomenology thematic analysis was used with the open-ended questions, including the spontaneous written comments and focus group interviews. Hermeneutics as a research method is a way of systematically dealing with interpretation (Bolton, 1987). Max van Manen (1990) explained hermeneutic phenomenological research as the study of lived experience; the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them; and a search for what it means to be human. As Vangie Bergum (1991) explained, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is concerned with the description of the experience and with the act of interpretation as a way of point to the nature of the phenomenon.

In qualitative research, themes are usually expressed as statements.

These statements highlight explicit or implied meaning that runs through most of the collected data or that involves deep and profound emotional or factual impact (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner and Steinmetz, 1991). One of van Manen's (1990) approaches to isolating themes in text, the selective or highlighting approach, was used to assist with reflective analysis. The text was listened to and read several times, asking, "What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience?" (93). These statements were highlighted and arranged into working themes.

Once the themes and data were revisited several times, and a consensus on the essence of the experience, the data were turned to again to find examples of this "truth." Some features of the phenomenon were extracted that helped make its essence visible (van Manen, 1990) by asking the following questions of the data: Of what aspect is this an instance? What questions about an aspect does this item of data suggest? What sort of answers to questions about an aspect does this item of data suggest? (Lofland and Lofland, 1995).

Writing home: Becoming colour-sighted

One of the themes that emerged during our focus groups was that race was not something most participants had given much thought about prior to adopting their children (Dwyer and Gidluck, 2006). Most parents indicated that they had given some consideration to the challenges of raising children of a race different from themselves but that it was only after their children were home with them that race really became salient.

I guess I always thought that people would have the same attitude that I do that "we're all the same inside" but it's pretty naïve in a way. [Adoption] really opened my eyes to just what it means to be a minority and how [our children] have to be strong when we're not there to help them ... in the face of racial discrimination.

Many parents in our study mentioned being colour-blind before they adopted—they didn't see White. "I hadn't ever heard the term White Privilege...White Privilege leads to a lot of stuff that I didn't realize until I started thinking back." As Register (2005) asserts, "That gift of sight is one of the greatest rewards an internationally adoptive parent ever receives" (94). Other authors also maintain that it is important for transracial adoptive parents to acknowledge the concept of White privilege (Frankenberg, 1993; Tatum, 1997; McIntosh, 1988) because many White people have never considered the benefits of being White. However, as Register points out, "Color blindness is a luxury our children can't afford" (84).

Many of our participants became (more) colour-sighted after becoming a multiracial family. Most had not reflected on the personal nature of race prior to becoming adoptive parents of Asian children, making them no different

than most other White people in Canadian society because being White means having the privilege of not having to consider race and its consequences in our society. Further, even much of the literature on multiculturalism, cross-culturalism, and diversity uses the words “ethnicity” and “culture” when actually referring to race. “It makes us feel racist if we acknowledge race, so we try not to, and we end up being color-mute.... Children learn ... that you don’t talk about race” (Bigler cited in Jayson, 2006: 25). This suggests that in addition to being socialized to be colour-blind, as part of the dominant race White people are also taught to be colour-mute.

It appears that many internationally adoptive parents feel more comfortable teaching their children about their ethnicity rather than about racism (Lee cited in Register, 2005), race, and racial identity. It is important for parents to acknowledge that while our families are inclusive, society is exclusive. Being White, many of us haven’t had to think about, let alone negotiate, this distance between family and society. However, after adopting transracially, some mothers realize that they learn to explicitly “do” family in ways biological mothers take for granted (Rothman, 2005). Questions such as “Are you the babysitter?” emphasize that we do not appear to others to be mother and daughter, because of race. In this way, transracial adoption is more complex than same-race adoption because visible differences between mothers and children increase challenges to our social acceptance as a family unit (Steinberg and Hall, 2000: 8). This distance between family and society seems contradictory to the “public exhibit” feature of being a multiracial family. Transracial adoption means that our family circumstances become “public” because of the visual differences between us and our children. We are, in effect, on display.

There was a recognition by our participants that when their children were with them they were given “the benefit of being honorary White.” And it was particularly troubling to many of the participants that people in the Chinese community saw their children as White:

As the kids get older ... they can pass off to the White world that they're just normal Chinese kids. It's a littler harder in the Chinese community to do that because they don't act like Chinese kids. They don't eat the same foods. They don't behave the same way as Chinese kids being raised in Chinese families. They're different.

Richard Lee (2003) has called this the transracial adoption paradox. He explains that racial/ethnic minority children adopted by White parents are racial/ethnic minorities in the society in which they live but are often perceived as if they are members of the majority culture because they have White parents. These children sometimes even perceive themselves to be members of the majority culture because of their adoption into a White family.

Many of the participants in this study were worried that they were not

equipped to help their children deal with racism. As one mother put it: “I’m about as White and as privileged as a White privileged person gets.... The only discrimination I have ever faced is gender based discrimination.” They talked about the paucity of post-adoption services to assist them, and their children, learn about racial issues: “There’s not a lot of post-adoption services.” Added another, “No, nothing.”

P. S. Canada’s not racist, is it?

It is important to note that many of the parents in this study expressed that neither they nor their children had experienced racism—so far. Most of our participants had pre-school children and those who had older children concurred that racism did not really become an issue until their children started school. However, for the majority of Canadians, racism appears to be most directly associated with more obvious forms of abuse such as blatantly derogatory remarks and discriminatory actions (Driedger and Halli, 2000; Park, 1997; Satzewich, 1998; Schick and St. Denis, 2005). One mother said:

I think it’s very hard when you know you’re White, you’ve lived with White privilege all your life and you don’t see anyone being overtly racist to your children. Because when your children are with you they’re sort of honorary White people. So, it’s hard to see race as an issue especially when they are little.

Even overt forms of racism were seen to be committed by ignorant individuals and sometimes people who “don’t intentionally try to be racist.”

Dominant discourse in Canada is that it is an egalitarian nation that celebrates and embraces multiculturalism (Driedger and Halli, 2000; Satzewich, 1998). Multiculturalist ideology upholds Canada to be a tolerant, accepting, accommodating and just society that protects the rights of all individuals regardless of race (Park, 1997). One mother in our study stated:

...race is a gigantic volatile complex issue in the United States ... and it’s an issue in Canada but it’s not an issue of the same nature at all. It doesn’t nearly, I think, as often prescribe your economic or social status in Canada as it does in the United States.

It’s important to distinguish the difference between “discovering” racism (Rothman, 2005) and learning about racism. All participants in our study expressed knowing, on some level, about the existence of racism. Some expressed the sentiment that they thought racism was more extreme in the U.S. than in Canada. However, after beginning the journey of transracial adoption, race becomes (more) salient for these parents. One mother indicated that, as a White woman, she would not be able to really understand or experience racism because she did not live it but others have.

Seeing the space in between: Negotiating new identities

Ted Aoki (1996) writes about the spaces in between the cultural identities of “East and West.” As two distinct cultural wholes, they are understood as a binary of two separate pre-existing entities, which can be bridged or brought together to conjoin in an “and.” This bridge can be viewed not as a path but as a dwelling place for people. He asserts that this third space is an ambivalent space of both East and West. Participants in our study also described how their children were living in between two worlds—essentially in a “third” space. “She can’t live on the White side and she can’t live on the Chinese side.” Some participants described how their children were viewed as White by some people in the Asian community and were viewed as Asian by the White majority. Others discussed how their children were not seen as Asian by some White people as demonstrated by comments such as “she doesn’t look Chinese” or “she’s starting to look more Chinese.” This is consistent with the transracial adoption paradox (Lee, 2003). This paradox contributes to the many contradictory experiences of the family, particularly of the children. Aoki also acknowledges that the space in between is a space of paradox, ambiguity and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction. He refers to this space between two cultural identities as a tensioned space. When a person is positioned between two cultures, this tensioned space can be interpreted as a lonely existence.

Terms such as “transracial” adoption emphasize the movement in getting across from one race to another. Aoki (1996) discusses the use of bridges in Oriental gardens, urging the visitor to linger rather than simply use it to get from one place to another. As mothers of children who are of a race different from us, we could use the space between East and West to linger and reconsider our identity as mothers.

Identity is not fixed. It changes over time and place. Anne-Marie Ambert (2003) writes that, “The birth culture constitutes a serious roadblock to the social acceptance of adoption” (2). This predominate discourse dismisses, excludes and even invalidates other women’s experiences and has forced us to reflect on our sense of identity as mothers. We argue that this language excludes and “minimizes” our experiences, and we examine the messages inherent in this language about what it means to mother. We, too, often feel positioned between two cultures—mothering and adoptive mothering. This is a tensioned space as we identify more with one or the other at different times. “Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within” (Hall cited in Aoki, 1996: 6). At times we are positioned as “mothers” and at other times we are positioned as “adoptive mothers.”

The space in between is a space where newness can flow as this is a space of generative possibilities (Aoki, 1996). This is consistent with what Lee (2003) points out, that it is important not to portray transracially adopted children as “passive recipients” of racial identity. “Identity is a complex mix of what one chooses, what is forced upon you and how one works with these dictated images”

(Park 1997: 19). Lee (2003) calls for more research on how these “adoptees personally negotiate their identities and sense of place in society” (725).

Some participants still worried about the future and about their children belonging to one community. As one mother pointed out:

When they're on campus, they're not part of a White family, they're Asian born ... they're no longer attached to your family, they're seen as Chinese or Vietnamese. And in university there's a difference because our kids are going to be discriminated against from the Asian point of view as well as the White community. So where do they fall?"

Jerry Diller and JeanMoule (2005) recognize that being isolated from their racial communities causes particular challenges for children adopted transracially. These children may lack support of the broader community, and have less protection as well as more exposure to conscious and unconscious biases and racism.

P. S. The model minority stereotype: Is it racism?

The Asian mystique, created by the way western popular culture has portrayed people from Asia, is pervasive in North American society (Prasso, 2005). The model minority characterization of Asians is a pervasive one—hard workers, really quiet, very intelligent (Tatum, 1997; Lee, 1996). While this stereotype might initially seem to be a positive and beneficial one, it has the negative effects of silencing people and making individuals invisible (Pon, 2000). While participants in this study did not always frame the positive stereotypes or attention their children receive as the discourse of a model minority, it is clear that it troubled them that, as one participant described it, “The world sees all of our girls the same.... As gifted China Dolls.” Participants spoke about how their children often do, or do not, fit the commonly held stereotypes of Chinese people and how the child’s personality and family background are often overlooked.

While participants in this study quite openly spoke of the irritation and frustration they felt as a result of commonly-held stereotypes of Asians that they and their children had encountered, most did not consider this to be racism *per se*: “It’s not really racism—but lack of awareness” was one common theme when discussions turned to racial stereotypes. Another mother said:

I don't think we've really encountered racism per say. I think what we have encountered is people's preconceptions ... people saying things like "you know she'll be musically inclined or very good at mathematics" and that type of thing.

This reaction is consistent with Sheridan Prasso’s (2005) argument that most North Americans tend to associate racism with only direct actions or

overtly negative and discriminatory comments. As such, the model minority stereotype serves to deny that Asian North Americans experience discrimination (Wu, 2002).

Continuing on the journey

Wanderer, your footsteps are the road, and nothing more; wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking. By walking one makes the road, and upon glancing behind one sees the path that never will be trod again. Wanderer, there is no road—Only wakes upon the sea. (Machado, 2003)

The current literature on children adopted transracially suggests that these children are “psychologically well adjusted, exhibit variability in their racial/ethnic identity development, and along with their parents, engage in a variety of cultural socialization strategies to overcome the transracial adoption paradox” (Lee, 2003: 728). Like us, all of the mothers in our study spoke about following the current trend of enculturation as part of their approach to mothering. Enculturation is defined as making a concerted effort to teach children about their birth cultures and heritages (Lee, 2003). But knowing about culture is not enough. Disregarding issues of race do not prepare children of colour to live in North American society.

In recent years, white families raising black kids, by birth or by adoption, have been fond of reassuring the children that color doesn't matter, and reassuring themselves that all you need is love. I don't actually believe that. And neither do most black folk. Not in America. Color does matter. You need a lot more than love.... If your child is going to grow up without the privileges of whiteness, you'd best learn what those are.” (Rothman, 2005: 50)

Learning to perceive differently often requires that one engage in activities that, in some way, remove one from the comfortable routines and habits of the familiar or well-known (Carson and Sumara, 1997). Having adopted transracially, some mothers are learning, either for the first time or more deeply, about the privileges of being White as they are taken to places typically difficult to access before becoming a multiracial family. Our responsibility to critique ideologies of indifference and homogeneity and value heterogeneity and difference (Borradori, 2003) is made that much more clear as mothers of children adopted transracially. Throughout our journey, we must question dominant borders and discourses. And as White mothers, we have the power to do this and leave not a path, but wakes upon the sea.

Authors' note: The title of this article is, in part, in reference to the film *Postcards*

from the Edge. The movie is about two women who explore their relationship as mother and daughter, including the daughter explaining how her mother's behaviour affected her childhood. The title is also in reference to mothering being a journey, of which we are in the middle. By exploring our mothering issues, we hope our daughters, and we, never end up on "the edge."

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Cultural Competence Beyond Culturally Sensitive Care for Childbearing Black Women

As racial and cultural diversity increase in Canadian society, health care professionals face challenges in providing appropriate care for all clients. Gaps in health status information, and disproportionately low access to health care for racially visible minority groups, exemplify these challenges. Identifying and understanding the influence of culture on health and health seeking behavior can address some of the challenges in meaningful ways. This paper will discuss the findings of a study that examined Black women's childbirth experiences in one of the Atlantic provinces. The study was guided by the tenets of feminist Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. Women's narratives can serve as a fundamental component of research knowledge for policy development. Data was collected mainly through in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions with Black women from Nova Scotia. Thematic analysis facilitated the categorization of key themes.

Although five themes emerged from the data for this study, this paper focuses on one of these themes: lack of cultural competence and its implications for perinatal health care. In exploring Black women's perinatal health care experiences, this study has explicated some of the manifestations of insensitive and incompetent perinatal care services. Developing skills in cultural competence allows health care professionals to improve the quality of perinatal health care provided to clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. The paper proposes the use of cultural competence as a process that will enable health care providers to work effectively across cultures and ultimately, to address health disparities along racial and cultural lines.

Introduction

Childbirth has been described in health literature as a cultural phenomenon (Davis-Floyd and Sargent, 1997). Nowhere in a culture are there more prescribed rituals and ways of behaving as occur around childbearing (Finn,

1993; Enang, 1999). Kathryn A. May and Laura R. Mahlmeister (1990) note that “cultural beliefs dictate how women and their families view childbearing and care for their newborn” (263). The relatively simple act of what is to be done with the placenta, for example, is affected by cultural mores: some dispose of it in the hospital while others take it home to plant a memorial tree for the child. Culture has impact on the various dimensions of childbirth including methods of prenatal care, choice of caregivers, the birthing process, use of pain relief measures, breastfeeding patterns and diet (Finn, 1993). Factors influencing these dimensions can range from the scientific medicine of the dominant cultures of Western societies such as Canada, to the indigenous childbearing traditions of the developing world (Mauricette, 1997). Given that the majority of health care providers are White and middle class (Sue *et al*, 1998; McNaughton Dunn, 2002), an important step to foster effective cross-cultural care should involve recognizing and acknowledging their own Eurocentric values, which are often seen as superior to others (Higham, 1988).

The lack of culturally responsive health care services to people of African descent living in Nova Scotia has been a long-standing barrier to health care (Enang, 2002). The purpose of this paper is to explicate this lack of cultural competence in perinatal health care based on the finding of a study of women of African descent from one of the Atlantic Canadian Provinces. The paper also proposes a cultural competence model to guide effective health care across cultural boundaries. The following topics are addressed in the paper: background to establish the significance of the study; the research process; key findings related to cultural competence at the institutional and individual levels; implications of study findings for cross-cultural care; and specific strategies to foster cultural competence among health care professionals including proposing a model for culturally competent health care.

From a socio-cultural viewpoint, human childbirth is a unique process involving highly systematized patterns of care that may be found in any culture. The diversity and patterns are so great that members of one culture might not recognize care in another one as care. Thus, if one cultural group confronts the practices of another, they may be left wondering how women even survive the childbirth process (DeVries, 1989; Sue *et al*, 1998: 82). Culture specifies the care available to the perinatal family. Culture also socializes and educates thereby eliciting the desire for a particular style of care (Enang, 1999: 2). The discourse surrounding culture and childbirth in any society reflects its social meaning and is a contribution to understanding the reality of childbirth as an event experienced by people within a particular society (Hewison, 1993). In recent times, there has been an increased realization and demand for respect by caregivers (Kitzinger, 1993). This respect is requested by individuals including childbearing women, their families and other stakeholders who are engaged in, and committed to, the responsibilities of perinatal and childbirth care.

Cultural differences amongst diverse populations influence perceptions

of quality of care during the childbearing period (Reid and Garcia, 1989). The reality of cultural differences and the effect of these differences on the needs of diverse populations accessing the public health care system require attention especially given the current demographic of Canada's population. Approximately 44 percent of Canada's population report origins other than British, French or Canadian (Statistics Canada, 2005). Of this figure, 13.4 percent are reported to be members of visible minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2005). Over 100 different ethno-cultural groups live in Nova Scotia. Approximately 19,000 Black people live in the province (Statistics Canada, 2005). This number is about five times the total for Blacks in the other four Atlantic provinces of Canada.

The arrival of Nova Scotians of African descent to the province dates back to the early seventeenth century. Indigenous Blacks constitute the largest visible minority group in the province, comprising fifty-seven percent (57 percent) of the total population of visible minorities in the province (Nova Scotia Department of Health, 2003). In relative and actual numbers, they represent a significant sub-population, which affects daily life in general and work life in particular throughout the province. In a local needs assessment, less than 50 percent of African Nova Scotian women ranked their satisfaction level with perinatal care as a 2.6 out of 5.0 (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994). Such findings call for more research in this area as limited evidence of health care experiences of African Nova Scotians exists.

The research process

The purpose of this study was to examine the childbirth experiences of African Nova Scotia women with a goal of generating knowledge that will inform health services for this population. Feminist Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology formed the guiding tenets for the study. The main sources of data collection were audio taped semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. All tapes were transcribed word for word and thematic analysis was used to identify major themes and their sub-themes from the transcripts.

Eight African Canadian women between the ages of 18 and 40, who gave birth in the Nova Scotia perinatal health care system, took part in individual interviews. Over 30 women participated in the focus group discussions. All participants in the interviews were African Nova Scotians who had their babies within two years of the study. In-depth individual interviews took place mostly in the women's homes. The Black Women Health Project: An initiative of the Inner City Community Health Centre served as a forum for these group discussions, data analysis and the initiation of social action projects, which were integral part of this participatory action research. Preliminary data analysis was validated and further enhanced through the use of several focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was used to capture the concerns and issues identified by study participants.

Findings

This examination of the childbirth experiences of African Nova Scotia women revealed “lack of culturally appropriate care” as a major theme. Other emerging themes included: meaning of the childbirth experience; access to health care; racism in health care; and value of support networks. This paper will focus on the lack of culturally appropriate care; other themes are addressed in a separate manuscript.

To provide culturally appropriate and competent care, it is important for nurses to remember that each individual is culturally unique and, as such, is a product of past experiences and cultural beliefs. These women identified a number of cross-cultural care issues that impacted on the health care experiences. These include limited cultural knowledge and education of health care professionals, and others which have been described under two sub-themes; 1) Cultural competence at the institutional level; and 2) Cultural competence at individual level.

Cultural Competence at the Institutional Level

Most women in the study expressed their perception that some of the cultural insensitivity they experienced occurs due to lack of the organizational commitment to multiculturalism. In validating the lack of cultural competence at institutional level, Joan A. Anderson (1998) notes that, health care institutions should emphasize the strengths of minority populations they serve. Professionals in leadership roles within health care institutions should identify ways of incorporating learning, knowledge and expertise from these communities in addressing the complex issues inherent in multiculturalism. The following are excerpts of what the women in this study had to say:

I think everybody is different in their own way ... I find that everybody have a different background, culture, or race. But it seems like when you go into the hospitals, everything you see is just White ... White babies' pictures, cards, magazines and stuff.

Organizations should strive to provide posters, magazines and additional audio-visual resources that reflect the diversity of the clients they serve. This provides a welcoming setting, reassuring clients that their cultures are accepted and valued in the health care environment (McNaughton Dunn, 2002). One participant spoke on the need for more representation of visible minorities in the health professions:

You know, some people have different religions. I think there should be more awareness in the hospital to be nice to people of African, Chinese, or Indian descents. A lot of people that live here now, do things differently in their country ... so there should be people of their culture in the hospital, that they could talk to, can relate to and share religious beliefs.

Another woman related this need for increased representation to the potential information resource that diverse staff would be:

It would be beneficial for women from different races to be able to have the information they need. If one nurse doesn't have the information, it would be nice to say, "well, we have someone else on staff from your culture that could help answer your questions better than I can."

Cultural representation among staff in the health care setting not only provides reassurance to the clients but serves as a readily available information source to health care professionals as well. Working closely with ethno-cultural groups allows health care professionals from the dominant culture to constantly assess their attitudes and biases based on their behaviour towards colleagues. Human resource departments in organizations should review hiring policies to determine whether they are conducive to staff from diverse cultural backgrounds (ACHA, 2000). Some women in the study observed that cultural sensitivity alone was not sufficient. Health care professionals require cultural knowledge about the communities they served:

To make sure they are sensitive to the people's needs, they should know a bit about our culture, a bit about us. And if they don't know ... There are ways to find out. There probably have some of the nursing staff or other staff that could answer our questions.

Similarly, another participant asserted, "we need more cultural diversity awareness. I think it will be helpful for everyone to see the different cultures because not everybody is Black and White."

Based on the perceived lack of cultural awareness, one woman suggested that perinatal health care institutions needed to integrate diverse perspectives into prenatal class content, she noted "Whites, Blacks, Native Indians, etc.... So that they can hear everyone's opinion and not just what one group wants." She also recommended that information on cultural issues should be made available to women and their families in accessible locations such as the libraries in their communities. Another woman expressed a similar need to recognize diverse needs:

Different babies require different things because Black people have different needs from White people. For example, skin and hair care. Everybody can't use the same kind of lotion, make-up or hairdo. It's different.

Another woman expressed the need to recognize minority people's needs in terms of diet planning in the hospital:

I was disappointed with the food. I found that they didn't come by to see if

some people can't eat certain things. When I was in the hospital, I had to get people to bring me food because I hardly ate any of the hospital food. I know they can't change their diet for everybody but there are certain things that certain people can't eat. And they didn't come by to say "could you eat the food today? Is there anything you didn't like? Is there anything else that you would like to have or substitute?" A lot of times they would send me my breakfast, dinner and then supper, and I would usually send it back.

The limited cultural knowledge and skill of health care professionals was a common thread in the narratives of many of the study participants. For example, one woman noted, "I think everybody is different, and everybody's childbearing experience is different. And so nurses should assess the needs of each individual person, not treat every person exactly the same." The following narrative from another woman further supported the lack of cultural competence by health care providers:

If our family comes in, they shouldn't get frustrated because we have extra one or two family members around. That is just the way we are. And if they are finding that they are having problems understanding our culture or understanding our needs then they need to first of all attack their administration to get some workshops or sessions. There are people that can come in and to do sessions with them—both patients and other professionals. And then they can also attack the training institutions that they came from ... and say, "well, you didn't tell me this. What are you doing for people that are coming through now?" Because you've got to stop the cycle somehow.

One of the participants recommended an educational process on interpersonal relationships for the health care providers. In response to the question on whether anything in her care could be changed, she said:

Actually, there is one thing that could change. Educate [the staff] on interpersonal relationships. Maybe even do some role playing so that they can get some idea to be nice. Not that they were bad. It's just the fact that you could feel something when they come in. And it wasn't "If I smile, she'll smile back" A couple of times, I said, "Hi," and they didn't even answer. They just kept right on about their business. So I didn't bother saying anything.

Cultural competence at the organizational (institutional) level is an effective strategy to address the health needs of diverse communities (Culley, 2000; ACHA, 2000; Kim-Godwin, Clarke and Barton, 2001). However, from the stories for these women, it is obvious that there are some gaps in the professional services and organizational culture of health care institutions. Unfortunately, there are currently no multicultural health care policies at Provincial

and Institutional levels. As a result, there are limited cultural resources in the health care institutions in the province.

Cultural Competence at the Individual Level

The women involved with this study identified a number of issues related to lack of cultural competence at the practitioner level. The women spoke of inappropriate care by a variety of providers such as physicians and nurses. These include treatment of family members, being insensitive to client's needs and displaying judgemental attitude towards some Black women. For example, one woman commented that,

One nurse kind of just dropped me off and left me. Like, "This is what you have to do." I had a bad labour, and I had trouble like trying to bath myself. I thought that they would at least send someone to help.

Another noted that her need to have family members around while in hospital was not respected:

I know I was sick. I had high blood pressure, but they used to come in and just kick my family and friends out. I never had a lot of friends down there. They used to just come in and kick anybody out. Those are my friends. I mean they are not more important than me having a stroke or something like that. But they came down to see me. They took their time and now you're just going to kick them out?

She went on to explain how the situation affected her, "I felt like a little kid ... Yes, 'Oh, you're sick'. You don't know what you are talking about." Another woman described a similar experience regarding her family members not being allowed to stay with her in the delivery room. She recalled,

My family was gone ... They didn't come back until after I was showered, and sent to my room to have my nap after supper. And it was so because my doctor said, "Well, you're not going to be bringing your whole in because I know you are from a large family."

She also explained how she missed the support of her family in the absence of sufficient professional support:

They [her family] were warned not to be there. So there was no family ... And the nurse called her and she came and broke my water. Then she [the physician] went and sat on the chair back there. Meanwhile, I'm just there gritting my teeth and saying, "What did you come here for?" You know, I believe it's totally different attitude from Ontario ... A totally different system. And I believe it's so because there you have everyone and

every culture. Both minority and Whites are treated well. I can picture the situation to this day. And I was saying, "What is she getting paid for ... ? And every contraction, I throw up. The nurse was standing there helping me. And she is still sitting in the chair. She says "well, get another bowl" and the nurse is standing by me and the nurse goes "Oh, Dr. X, I think the baby ... the head is out" So she says, "The baby is out?." And she jumps up off her chair. She attends to me. It's just me, her and the nurse in the room. All my family was gone.

One woman had similar concerns while deciding which of her family members and her *doula* she could take with her to the operating room. She felt pressured to choose between her sister who was videotaping the birth and her *doula* who was her main support as a single parent throughout her pregnancy:

And when I had to go in the OR, they said "who do you want to take?" I said "I want my sister and my doula there." They were saying, "You can only have one person." I said, "No, that is my doula. She has been with me throughout my whole pregnancy and through labour ... And I want my sister there so she could tape." I was really upset by this because I thought that they should tell you these things before so you could tell them your own plan especially if you have a doula.

Some participants felt that they were rushed to leave and return to their homes:

The worst thing was the hospital process. You are in there and you have to go home. You want to be pampered. You just left home. I'm a person with two kids already at home. I just left home with the kids. Why shuffle me out of the hospital? "You have to leave. Oh, you have to leave." "Will you be staying for supper?" That's the worst thing.

One woman recalled feeling frustrated at repeatedly being asked when she would be going home:

Constantly nurses are asking you "when will you be leaving?" It was so horrible for them to tell you, "Well, will you be staying for lunch? When will you be leaving?" But I said I still need a break from home. And it's like, "Oh, no, that bed has got to be used by somebody else."

Another participant felt that there were a lot of assumptions regarding her preferences when it came to options for care:

Sometimes I find they just assume without finding out your needs first ...

They shouldn't be so judgmental. It's their job so they should be personable about it ... They have to put themselves in the people's shoes. It's like a business. You have to treat the customers with respect.

As illustrated by these narratives, health care professionals need to understand, accept and adapt to cultural diversity. These are essential elements of cultural competence that should form a part of curricula for health professions training institutions. Yet, it has been determined that institutions of higher learning are not active in incorporating cultural content as an integral part of professional preparations (Papadopoulos and Lees, 2002). Some proponents of anti-racism argue that nursing (and indeed all other health professions) must challenge racism and avoid opting for a 'politically soft option' which embraces curricula issues that merely reify culture (Alleyne, Papadopoulos and Tilki, 1994); without discussing the various ways that cultural intolerance are borne out in the health care setting. Such an approach denies the centrality or existence of racism and pays "superficial attention to cultural rites and rituals" (Papadopoulos, Tilki and Alleyne, 1994: 583) of patients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Discussion

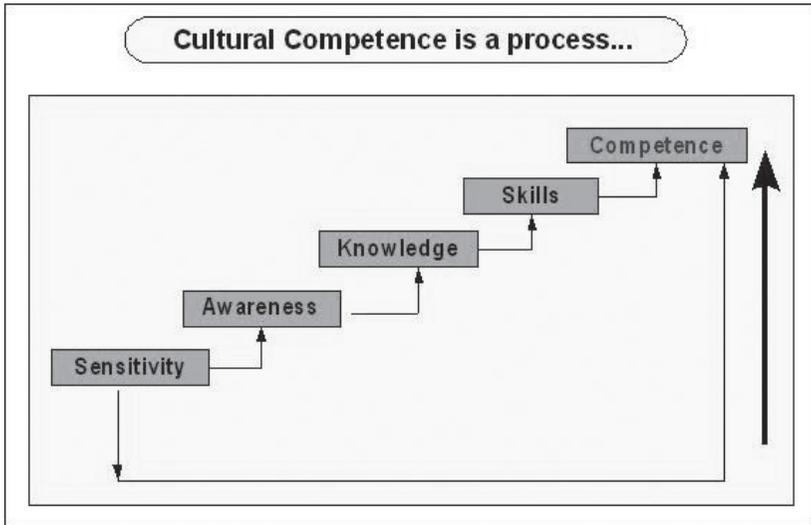
As Canadian society becomes more racially and culturally diverse, health care professionals face the challenge of identifying and exploring issues of diversity in meaningful ways that would improve the quality of care for all clients (Enang, 1999: viii). Whilst there are vibrant, diverse communities, the health system is perceived to overlook and to be unresponsive to their diverse culture-based needs. It is essential for the health care system in Nova Scotia to embrace the task of enhancing perinatal health care through the process of cultural competence.

Erin Skinner (1998) identified the lack of research and culturally relevant health resources as health issues of concern in the African Nova Scotian community. Participants in this study have identified individual (personal level) barriers to access encountered by ethnic minorities including: lack of knowledge, respect, understanding, and insensitivity of health professionals caring for clients from diverse cultures. Their narratives also illustrate an individual bias amongst some health care professionals expressed as a lack of accommodation of culture-specific needs of the clients they serve. A fundamental feature of effective cross-cultural interaction is the basic appreciation of cultural norms, values and beliefs that even health care professionals carry within. These women's narratives suggest a need for health care professionals to develop awareness, sensitivity and knowledge about the needs of the clients from different cultural backgrounds.

In addition, adapting to diversity and recognizing personal biases are also important aspects of working effectively across cultures. The process of developing cultural competence as illustrated in the figure below is essential for

health care professionals seeking to effectively work across cultural boundaries. Cultural competence is not a goal but a journey; a continual process requiring constant learning, reflection and self-assessment.

A Model for Developing Cultural Competence



In this illustration, cultural sensitivity, defined as a “desire and effort to develop programs and services in a manner that respects diversity” (Kim-Godwin, Clarke, and Barton, 2001: 922) is positioned at the start of the continuum.

Sensitivity precedes awareness, which involves recognition leading to knowledge and more informed understanding of the influence that culture has on behaviour of providers and recipients of care. The knowledge allows an acquisition of skills to improve self-assessment, acceptance and adaptation to diversity, which are all essential components of cultural competence.

However, competence in one area for a specific cultural group may not be transferable. Health professionals should be willing to engage in the process of developing cultural competence in a variety of health care settings for diverse cultural groups.

Cultural competence can be described as a set of behavior, attitudes, and policies that enable a system and individual health care professionals to work effectively with culturally diverse families and communities. Cultural competence includes: sensitivity, awareness, knowledge and skills (Kim-Godwin, Clarke and Barton, 2001; McNaughton Dunn, 2002; Papadopoulos and Lees, 2002; Rounds, Weil and Bishop, 1994; Shapiro, Hollingshead and Morrison, 2002). Differences between a health care providers’ and a recipients’ interpretations of a given situation will affect the perceptions of clients, especially if the care provided is incongruent with his or her needs and expectations (Sue *et al*, 1998; Kim-Godwin, 2001). Thus, it is imperative for health care providers to

develop a knowledge base that incorporates an awareness of their own culture, preferences and prejudices. Cultural assumptions are so implicit to our behavior that we are usually not aware of them. The health care provider's ability to recognize personal culture-based preferences is vital to the provision culturally competent health care. An awareness of the influence of one's culture-based beliefs is essential to providing culturally competent care. Without awareness, "western values of individualism, autonomy, independence, self-reliance..." (Kim-Godwin, Clarke and Barton, 2001: 919) results in conflict and miscommunication with clients from cultures having dissimilar values.

Acquiring cultural knowledge and skills involves understanding that concepts of culture are central to the delivery of effective care. Culture-specific knowledge is an essential component of cross-cultural care but focusing on culture-specific information is not desirable because, among other things, it encourages a superficial approach to care, which reduces multicultural issues to the level of a recipe (Geiger, 2001; Papadopoulos and Lees, 2002). Adapting to diversity requires a willingness to work within the client's cultural framework; to be flexible when using professional skills to address health needs (Kim-Godwin, Clarke and Barton, 2001; Shapiro, Hollingshead and Morrison, 2002).

At the institutional level, cultural competence is demonstrated in various ways including clearly articulating an organization's commitment to multicultural care in its vision and mission statement (ACHA, 2000). It is evident in a culturally diverse workforce including diversity among those in leadership positions. Institutional budgets of such organizations would be set out in ways that include multicultural resources along with other priority areas. Professional development opportunities such as workshops and seminars would include cultural education.

Conclusions

Culture provides us with a way of viewing our world and represents the assumptions we make about our everyday life or the situations we face. Nurses should be aware of their own cultural values because when these values are at odds with those of their clients, conflict may occur (Miller, 1995). Health care providers should not try to impose their beliefs on the patient—especially if no harm is created from the patients' way of relieving health problem (McNaughton Dunn, 2002). Understanding the dynamic of difference and how these differences may influence health care services utilization, may inform the development of policies to address the health disparities observed among racially visible minority groups. Recognizing the ways in which these differences affect the establishment of rapport and therapeutic interaction is essential to sustaining equitable access to care. Learning about clients' values, beliefs and practices is an ongoing process. Thus, working effectively across cultures is not about knowing everything there is to know about another culture, instead it is about an eagerness to learn and openness to understanding the many ways of viewing the world.

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Mothering Through Acculturation *Reflections of Salvadorian Mothers in Canada*

This paper presents findings from a qualitative study with Salvadorian mothers in Southwestern Ontario. A total of 16 mothers were interviewed. Though the paper describes their struggles in negotiating the settlement process it also highlights their resiliency, which enabled them to be emotionally available for their daughters. Immigration invariably challenged each mother's understanding of mothering, drawing her into a reassessment of what she needed to do in order to support her daughter's cultural transition into Canadian society.

Introduction

The subject of how Salvadorian women negotiated their roles as mothers after forced migration and during settlement in Canada is close to my heart since I am an immigrant who mothered two young children while navigating the challenges of acculturation. Like many of the women in this study, underemployment, language barriers, prejudice, and discrimination influenced both my acculturation process and my mothering experience in Canadian society. And yet, exploring the mothering experiences of Salvadorian women was not in my mind as I began this study. My original intent was to examine the values that women perceived to be important to either maintain or transform while acculturating. As the study progressed, however, it became evident that the women's mothering experiences were integral to their acculturation. These experiences as mothers were, however, almost invisible because they were embedded in the women's multiple everyday tasks. The research findings presented here enhance our understanding of how the settlement experiences of immigrant women are closely tied to their active involvement in raising their children in a context foreign to their own. Additionally, they bring forth the invisibility and the hardships of mothering in a different context; the women's agency in

the re-positioning of themselves in order to support the social incorporation of their children in their new country, while they themselves are negotiating their own cultural transition.

Background: Salvadorian migration to Canada

During the civil war (1980–1992), millions of Salvadorians fled to North America in search of a safe haven (Kusnir, 2005). Between 1982 and 1983, approximately 3,000 refugee-seekers came to Canada directly from El Salvador. A second wave, of approximately 7,000 people, arrived during the mid-1980s and included people who had first illegally settled in the United States. Subsequent Salvadorian immigrants have arrived more gradually through Canada's family re-unification program (Da, 2002). A total of 33,860 El Salvadorian people came to Canada between 1974 and 2001, making them a relatively small group compared with other immigrant groups to Canada (Garcia, 2006).

The Salvadorians are distinctive from other immigrant groups to Canada. They have come to Canada from various regions of their home country. Most are from low socio-economic classes, but they have very different political commitments; some supported the military, others were revolutionaries. Many lived for some time in a transitional country such as the U.S., Mexico, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, or Cuba (Carranza, 2007a) before coming to Canada.

The specific social-geographical context of this paper is Kitchener-Waterloo, a medium-sized city in Southwestern Ontario. This is one of the fastest growing communities in Ontario, with a population of approximately 500,000, of which approximately 92,775 individuals are foreign-born (Region of Waterloo, 2004). Kitchener-Waterloo boasts Canada's fifth largest per capita immigrant population. Historically, immigrants came here from the United Kingdom, Portugal, Germany, and Poland. Indicative of more recent immigration trends, newer arrivals are from Yugoslavia, China, Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Romania, and South and Central America. Refugees comprise 18.3 percent of the city's population, almost seven percent higher than the national average (Region of Waterloo, 2004).

There are approximately 7,000 people of Latin American origin in the region. The largest groups are from Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras. Others are from Chile, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, and Cuba (Region of Waterloo, 2004).

For the most part, Salvadorians arriving in this region have had the support of church congregations including Lutheran, Mennonite, United Church, and Jehovah's Witness. Like all immigrants, they are entitled to government social assistance, English classes, and employment and settlement counseling. While the overall context of reception has been supportive, the initial refugees arrived during a time of economic recession when jobs were scarce (Carranza, 2007a).

Although multi-ethnic, the city where this research was conducted lacks

the diversity of larger urban centres. The Spanish-speaking community is relatively small compared with such metropolitan areas as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver where the majority of immigrants and refugees from Latin America have settled. In a small city, there may be less acceptance of racial/ethnic diversity and less understanding of refugee experiences. The majority of city residents are of white European background; their families entered Canada several generations ago. Their very different migration experiences may mean that Salvadorians in this region, in addition to being relatively isolated, find little external support, let alone an understanding of their trauma and losses (Carranza, 2007b).

In short, there was no established Salvadorian community to welcome and support the initial refugees. They had to face the challenge of living with another language, another culture, and another climate without the help of a community of co-ethnics. While they quickly joined the work force, they often worked for low wages. Many faced a sharp downward mobility, as their Salvadorian credentials and experience were not valued in the Canadian context (Carranza, 2007a, 2007b).

Mothering across borders

Regardless of race and ethnicity, mothering is a challenging task across the globe, made more difficult for women who lack a supportive community and/or extended family. Women's mothering is profoundly important to family structure (Chodorow, 1978: 3). Women place more emphasis on relationships, especially when it comes to their moral decisions, than do men (Gilligan, 1982). Mothers teach their children what they think is important for their survival and well-being in their own specific context.

Patrice DiQuinzio (1999) argues that mothering is influenced by social, cultural, political, economic, psychological and personal experiences. For example, Latina mothers' perceptions about mothering, including what it means to be a "good" or "bad" mother, have been shaped significantly by their history of colonization and oppression based on class, race, ethnicity and religion (Carranza, 2007a). Falicov (1998) goes so far as to argue that Latina mothers have been socialized to emulate the Virgin Mary with regards to self-abnegation and the sacrifices they make for their children.

Migration across borders challenges mothers to go beyond their expected mothering roles (Rosental and Roer-Strier, 2001; Wang and Phinney, 1998). For example, immigrant mothers of Latin American heritage living in North America perceive their role as nurturers to be acutely heightened after migration. After migration, mothers became the gatekeepers of their country-of-origin's key values (e.g. virginity, respect, obedience and familism, and strong family ties and loyalty between family members) (Baron, 2000; Flores and Carey, 2000; Gonzales-Castro, Boyer, and Balcazar, 2000; Partida, 1996). Hence, mothering in a country different than one's own entails a "transnational crossing connected to their memory and identity" (Reyes, 2002: 142).

Another recent study that I conducted with immigrant Salvadorian mothers and their adolescent daughters suggests that mothers use their transnational web of relationships with family members to nourish and maintain cultural values. Through story telling, mothers teach their daughters about *La vida Salvadoreña* (Salvadorian life), including their history of colonization, as well as the oppression of the indigenous people and their resistance to oppression. I found that such story-telling buffers negative effects of prejudice and discrimination. The daughters teach the same stories to their children. Together, they are defining the new generation of Salvadorians in their new country according to their race and ethnicity (Carranza, 2007a). Thus, in this instance and elsewhere, the cultural background of the mother shapes the motherhood experience (Richardson, 1993).

Methodology

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with Salvadorian-born mothers living in a mid-sized Ontario city. All participants fled the civil war in El Salvador. Eight held university degrees or college diplomas. Eight had attended elementary school only. Out of the 16 mothers, eleven were married, three were separated or divorced, and two were widows.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish and in the women's homes. They lasted between 90 minutes and two hours and were audio-taped with the consent of the participants. A modified grounded theory approach was used to conduct the analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). I wrote up "research memos" after each interview. I was as accurate as possible in my observations of the interview process, recording the dynamics between the interviewee and myself and making notes about what was said and not said. I engaged in the interview process with all my senses, listening with intentionality and asking questions from a stance of curiosity about the "you knows" used by the participants (Ely, 1991). I was careful to probe their assumption that as a Salvadorian mother I would know some of their struggles.

A critical stance was maintained throughout the project (Reason, 1994). This entailed having awareness about the politics of difference and knowledge production (Freire, 2004) and working closely with three Salvadorian consultants throughout the research (two mothers and an adult daughter). Both mothers worked within the Salvadorian community, one as a health promotion officer, the other as a community development worker. Their involvement was critical in the development of interview questions, recruitment, and data analysis, especially regarding emergent themes and the overall process of knowledge production.

Findings

The following section presents some of the struggles that the mothers in this study experienced in their cultural transition into Canadian society. Their resilience and ability to bounce back in spite of their losses is noted as well.

Pseudonyms and some non-identifying biographical information are added to contextualize selected quotations.

**“Obligaciones de madre: Sufrimiento y sacrificios por los hijos”
[Mothers’ duties: Suffering and sacrifices for the children].**

Maternal sacrifice is a common value among Latin American women (Falicov, 1998). In this study, all 16 mothers talked about the changes they had made after migration to support their acculturation into Canadian society. The majority talked about having to endure significant sacrifices beyond what they would have experienced if they had stayed in El Salvador in order for their daughters to “get ahead.”

Julia, a stay-at-home mother and divorcee, says: “I sacrificed myself for my children. They have nothing to be ashamed of ... I have not had another man since I separated from their father.” Julia’s choice to stay home to watch over her four children came from her desire to keep an eye on them, hoping to ensure their success at school. Her remark also highlights her pride about choosing to remain single, not even dating after her divorce; her “decency” was more valuable to her than her desire to explore new relationships. According to Julia, her impeccable conduct after the divorce brought them (her and her children) high esteem within their extended family, as well as within the local Latino community.

In the following, Angela, a former lawyer, comments on the sacrifices she has made for her three daughters:

I have not gained much as a woman, like I had to give up my career... That’s the way it is, you gain something, but you lose something else... I, as mother, have been able to be close to my daughters ... I have many dreams for them. I tell them, “You don’t know all the sacrifices that I’d made especially for you [e.g., escaping in the middle of the night from the death squads, giving up her career and political ideals]. You’ll know it when you’re older.”

Angela’s comment makes it clear that the trauma she experienced before her migration continues to influence the mother-daughter relationship. Finding a safe haven for her daughter has involved significant sacrifices. Angela’s comments to her daughters highlight the embedded expectations that come with such sacrifice. It is culturally appropriate for Salvadorian mothers to expect their daughters’ gratitude for their sacrifices. Gratitude is translated into reverence, obedience, and respect for the parents, especially the mother. At the same time, Angela’s choices reflect her interpretation of what mothering in the new country means to her and the re-positioning she herself went through. She shifted from a career-oriented woman to a stay-home mother. She did this with the belief that she was doing what was best for her daughters.

As is true of other mothers in this research, Angela's choices were shaped by the loss of extended family members to support her mothering:

There [El Salvador] you have aunts, brothers to go and ask for help. The kids have someone else to go to complain about their parents. They make suggestions and give you and them advice. You know that they're there to help and protect the family in accordance with our moral and cultural values. You don't have that here....

Consuelo comments on the sacrifices she made by accepting to work outside her chosen profession, doing janitorial work so her daughters could stay in school:

We came with four children. A counselor told us that the money we were getting was not going to be enough for our four children and that our oldest child had to work. I said, "No, I will sacrifice myself [to work in a low paying job] but my children will obtain a career, no matter what." I don't regret anything, but it is hard.

Arguably, Consuelo's impetus to sacrifice so her daughters could go to school comes from the fact that in El Salvador she was part of an upper middle-class milieu where attaining higher education was an entitlement for children. She had taught her daughters the importance of education, and she wanted to continue this value in the new country, even if it meant sacrificing her own self-fulfillment. Like Angela, Consuelo was challenged to make difficult choices. These choices were an extension of what mothering her children meant in her country-of-origin.

Martha comments on the sacrifices she made when she chose to work at night in order to spend more time with her children:

Yes, it is hard to work nights only. It is hard on your body and your overall health.... But I wanted to see them off to school every day, to be home when they came home from school, to have dinner together. I sleep when they are at school.... I also like to volunteer when they have trips or something special at school.... My mother watches them at night. I still call them to say good night though ... I know that I have to choose, but to work to support my children, but I also like to be present for them, specifically in those special moments.... So I just do what I got to do

In the mothers' view, sacrifices were an expected aspect of mothering. However, the mothers in this study perceived that these sacrifices went beyond the hardships they would have endured had they stayed in their country-of-origin, particularly when these mothers were forced to flee their country in search for safety for themselves and their daughters.

Mothers' strategies to support themselves

Two key personal strategies emerged from the interviews. The first involves prayer, and the second concerns the ways in which the mothers learned to be both flexible and assertive.

Mothers' prayers

A number of the mothers talked about the power of prayer as a way to deal with the stresses of acculturation and with their daughters' challenging behaviour. Lourdes, a mother of five, notes:

Yes, it was very hard for me then [daughter's adolescence and challenging behaviour]. It was very hard, very hard. I begged to my God to help me because I felt that I couldn't go on anymore. My religion has helped me a lot. God helped me see things from a different perspective, and to learn to talk to and understand her [daughter]. [He also helped me] to ask for forgiveness and to say, "I made a mistake." It was my prayers that moved me forward and to be more open and to give room for her to tell me that I was making a mistake.

Norma stated:

I think God was the only one who understood me. He gave me the strength that I needed to go on. I couldn't understand her. She couldn't understand me. God was always supporting me.

Several mothers said that their faith was an inner resource that allowed them to cope with acculturation and to counter threats to core Salvadorian values. Lourdes' prayers invited her into a self-reflective process; that is, they allowed her to evaluate her actions and behaviour towards her daughter and to rescue a damaged relationship. Norma's prayers provided her with the inner support that she needed at the time. Meanwhile, Marta, a mother of two, says:

I don't go to church very often. I am too busy running from one place to another. I do pray a lot. I pray to God that he will take care of my children. I pray so they do not encounter racist people in their path.

Nancy stated:

There is so much racism here. I pray that my children do not encounter racist people at school. I do not go to church the way I would like to because I am so busy with work, the kids and in the house. But I never forget to say my daily prayers ...

For the most part, the mothers in this study used their faith as a source of

strength during difficult times with their daughters; they also drew on their faith to cope with the challenges of acculturating in what they experienced as a racist environment.

Becoming assertive, more tolerant, and open to others

Several mothers talked about becoming more tolerant and flexible in order to support their daughters' successful incorporation into Canadian society. Consuelo, a mother of three, comments:

Soon enough I realized that this was another culture and, of course, it was difficult.... Here is not like back home, things are different here. It is hard to raise children here.... I changed a lot here. I became more tolerant.

Roberta concurs:

It was very difficult. I started thinking about the changes that I needed to do because my major goal was to support the children to fit in here.... I became more open and tolerant with my daughters' friends.... I grew fond of them.

Ana comments:

It was very hard to take a look of myself and to see that she [daughter] was right. I was judging her friends negatively only because they had a lot of tattoos.... Once I got to know them; I realized that they were very sweet kids. They were important in my daughter's life and I needed to support her rather than to punish her by prohibiting her to see her friends. When I think about it now I see that I was just trying to protect her the best way I could....

Here, the mothers' desires for their daughter to fit in have led them to make compromises with respect to the behaviour they expect from their daughters.

At the same time, several mothers talked about learning to be more assertive with their children. This departure from the expected unconditional cultural dedication and abnegation occurred because they felt there was too much at stake if their daughters were to lose Salvadorian key values. Concha, a separated stay-at-home mother, says:

I said to her [daughter], "We're going to speak clearly. I want you to be honest and sincere with me. I told you many times that I don't want you to have friends [boys] that wear earrings or that long and messy hair, that have tattoos, or that have those [gesture with her hands] baggy pants." I also said, "All my children have been very obedient and they have listened to me when I told them not to do certain things. ... and you will not be different from them."

Concha may have felt that she needed to be more assertive with her daughter because she was raising her alone: Salvadorian women perceive that they are blamed for separation or divorce. Mothers also perceive that they are blamed if children misbehave. Single mothers, divorced mothers in particular, think that others within the Latino community are closely watching them (Carranza, 2007a). Concha's impetus to keep her daughter in line may have stemmed from her fear of criticism from her ethnic group and church congregation.

Mothers of all social statuses talked about needing to redefine their maternal role to meet the demands of the new country. It appears that the mothers were re-positioning themselves to continue their role as effective mothers. Consuelo and Roberta learned to become more flexible and tolerant; Ana learned to be less judgmental; Concha learned to be more assertive; Ana learned to be more self-reflective and less judgmental.

Conclusion

This study draws attention to the significance of mothering in the lives of immigrant women, noting their resilience and their ability to modify parenting strategies to fit the needs of the new country. As is shown in the study's findings, mothers develop innovative strategies to guide their children through the acculturation process.

The discussion shows how immigration has challenged each mother's unique understanding of what mothering means to her. Mothers are inevitably drawn into a re-assessment of what is needed. Some become more tolerant, others more assertive. Overall, while self-sacrifice remains at the heart of the maternal experience, the expectation of maternal passivity seems to be changing. Having said this, it is important to note the unequal relations between these immigrant women and the Canadian society at large (e. g., exclusion from meaningful employment and lack of recognition of foreign experience and credentials); these are the focal point of the sacrifices they make for the sake of their daughters' "successful" incorporation into Canadian society. The findings indicate that in spite of the Canadian policy on multiculturalism, discrimination and prejudice continues to exist. Government initiatives, Provincial and Federal, which aim to the inclusion and recognition of foreign credentials, are imperative.

The participants' mothering experiences are influenced by several factors. First, their history of colonization along with certain patriarchal practices continues to influence their choices (e. g., remaining single after divorce for the sake of decency). Second, the women are marked by their experiences of loss and trauma due to war and migration, as evident in the heightened emphasis on their daughters' safety. Third, the settlement context, including experiences of systemic racism or downward social mobility, affects their mothering experience. Finally, they are influenced by the challenges of their own acculturation to a foreign country.

The mothers in the study juggle myriad challenges. Yet their work is done

in the privacy of their homes, in silence and without external recognition. For this reason, if for no other, research on immigrant mothers' circumstances and perspectives is critical.

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Delivery Room Under Renovation

—for Susan, for Alec Michael

The night my water broke, a week early,
I held my wide sides and rocked, knowing
that before another day came, no matter what the pain,
you would be born. And then I went upstairs
to my quiet study. It was two a.m. and my last chance
to be alone with poetry for what I knew,
the second time around, would be a long
exhausted, milk-pocked haul. Every time I stood
to take a book down from the shelf, your waters
poured out of me. I sat and wrote until the contractions
became too strong. Slowly I was drawn by the rope
around my hips, dipped in and out of that well
of pain. In between I sipped rose tea,
marked a few last-minute changes on a manuscript,
dripped and dripped and dripped.

In the hospital a day later, they handed me you
in the recovery room. My abdomen had been
stapled shut and I was still numb from the ribcage
down. We were in a room full of the knock and rattle
of jackhammers. Plastic sheeting covered the drywall remodel.
“You should breastfeed her now,” said the nurse,
and I couldn’t quite believe it. “*Now?*” I complained,
more child than mother, “I’m pretty tired right now,”

Rachel Rose

but the nurse set her lips, untied my hospital gown,
helped that tiny rosemouth yawn and latch
onto the breast. I gasped as the baby's tugs burned
the thin skin, then laughed at her fine round face
as she squinted at us, blinking her eyes,
and we were blessed, and wiped our eyes.

The nurse, leaning over my bed, said to us
they were bringing in a woman to recovery
whose baby had just died. She did not need
to ask us to stifle our delight. The woman was wheeled in,
moaning but sedated. The nurse pulled the curtain
around her bed, and I held my newborn, her eyes
still glistening with erythromycin, the small white bonnet
pulled over her wet hair, and only a thin curtain
separated me from the mother whose baby had died:
I don't mean a metaphorical curtain, I mean a thin
green hospital curtain on a metal track,
and I wished, but dared not, pull it back.

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Delilah

—for Jen and Gabriela

You turned two women into mothers, transformed them entirely,
reshaped them with the hard tools of love and grief
into women stronger than they had any right to be.
You changed the world! Brief spark burning,
you flared and illuminated for many
what it means to be human and vulnerable,
what it means to be open to birth and death.

Their arms will ache with your absence,
they will be heartsick without you.
They spent every moment they were given loving you.
They will remember your weight, your perfect shape
in their arms, how they learned to love each other
through the worst nights, how they held on to one another,
did not let go,

Even when you let go.

The night your spirit left your body,
they carried you outside
into the garden, into the dark and beautiful
garden. Their arms trembled
knowing you were gone. The night trembled
with birdsong.

But look: all over the world, we still see you!
Just today in my garden, a golden butterfly rose
to brush the lilacs. At dusk in California, a hummingbird,
ruby throat pulsing, opened a sunflower
and drank like a small prayer of courage, courage!

You opened us to love
as the sun opens roses to its great shining.

Drunk

You take your son and daughter to the lake
to feed the ducks, you hold your daughter's hand
and run quacking through the small daisies, then fall down
in a heap, kicking your legs in sync with her legs,
laughing out loud. Your son watches from a bench, sighs and calls,
"Mama, are you drunk *again*?"
The couple bike-riding past look over their shoulders,
an old man raises his binoculars.
It is the *again* that gets you, as though
every day you get drunk and drag your children out to chase mallards.
As though he's ever seen you drunk, your carefully protected firstborn,
as though you manage to drink more than a glass of red
a couple times a month. You tell him
that he will *never* see you drunk
and something in your voice stops you both from saying any more.
You give them their bread crumbs
and watch as through a glass, darkly,
their delight at the painted turtles who poke their shy beaks
up from under the ducks, and you swallow
the tannic memories, protective
of them: they will not know what it is to see, as you saw,
grandma passed out on the upstairs bed, to see grandpa
raving with alcohol, prophet in a cave, flinging his dark
sticky curses. Your son will not, as you did,
hold your mother's hand and lead her crying from their
house back to her car, and he will also not

Rachel Rose

be grateful for this, though it has cost,
because he will not know.
Just as your friend whom you love,
recalls with wonder her son saying,
after she told him to clean up all the flour he'd spilt,
"Mama, was anyone ever as mean to you as you are to me?"
and how she swallowed her words, remembering her father
who bent the metal hangers across her shoulders,
and *No*, I didn't understand my father's yelling, but I was so afraid,
though he would say he protected me all his life
from the wooden spoons his mother used
to beat the questions out of him. No, they will not understand
what they have been spared, because we have also spared them
this knowledge. We have swallowed it
and set our lips, knocked back that ancient vintage,
those complicated, full-bodied, stone fruit notes
that linger on the finish.

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“You Gotta Let Go if You Want to Hang On”

Intensive Parenting Among Middle Class Mothers Separated from their Children

This is a study of upper-middle-class mothers who sent their teenage children to an “emotional growth” school because of their out of control behaviors. The mothers construct their decision as not a choice but as necessary to keep their children safe. The nature of children and their responsibilities as parents left them no alternative. They see the period of physical separation from their children as one during which they become mothers in a fuller, deeper sense and an intimate psychological relationship between mother and child is restored. They see themselves as good or even the best of mothers. In contrast to poorer women living apart from their children, these mothers retain a self image as “good” mothers but do not challenge the “good” versus “bad” mothering ideology that shapes their experience. I make these points using evidence from an Internet site where these mothers and (fewer) fathers of the children share their innermost feelings and ideas about their children, their parenting and themselves.

Despite the potential for being stigmatized as bad mothers, the women I study here sent their teenagers away to a special residential facility. Using evidence from an Internet discussion site that both provided qualitative evidence and enabled me to generate quantitative measures of important variables, I examine their experiences both “from the inside,” as they themselves construct it, and from the “outside,” highlighting dimensions of their experience that were hidden from their view. Diana L. Gustafson (2005a: cover blurb) and others recently described how mothers who live apart from their children are “regarded as unnatural, improper, and even contemptible” and how the cultural construction of “good” versus “bad” mothers is both cause and consequence of this labeling. Despite all this, some few mothers with considerable financial resources and social power do live separately from their children. If economics is key, we would

expect their experiences to be very different from that of poor “bad” mothers involuntarily separated from their children, but if ideology and living apart are the crucial factors these mothers would be even worse since they are separated by choice from their children. I study such unusually circumstanced women. I examine a large sample of upper-middle-class North American mothers whose teenage children live in a special residential facility because of their “out-of-control” behaviors. I examine how these mothers construct their separation from their children. Central to their experiences are their understandings of the nature of children and of their obligations and dreams as parents. (In a separate article I analyze their response to stigma.) My findings both add to and refine current understandings of links between social class, gender, and the experience of parenting. After sketching the social class of these mothers and describing the facility, I discuss these mothers’ accountings for the separation, and their understandings of the nature of childhood and parenthood.

Because the full program costs well over \$70,000 (US) per year and takes at least two years, the mothers in this study are at least middle and likely upper-middle class. They include women who are, or are married to, doctors, lawyers, engineers, executives, and business owners. Since “access to economic resources and its influences on mothers’ experiences, objectives, and strategies is a significant but understudied dimension of mothering” (Arendell, 2000: 1199) this study helps fill a large gap in research.

The “school,” located in a very isolated part of the western United States, provides both an academic curriculum and more centrally an “emotional growth” component that, significantly, is also called a “curriculum.” The word implies a set of learning objectives and steps to attain them, interconnected and sequenced in such a way as to optimize progressive mastery of what has to be learned. The goals include developing maturity in managing one’s own emotions, being honest with one’s self and others, taking responsibility for one’s behaviour, and others.

In this article I refer to the facility as EG-School, highlighting its stated commitment to Emotional Growth. While called a “school,” the institution clearly functioned in ways analogous to aspects of the juvenile criminal justice system, and families were allowed to deduct “tuition” payments as a medical expense on their tax returns.

My evidence comes from a “Parents’ List,” an Internet site where only parents of current or former EG-School students raise and discuss issues they consider important.¹ I carefully analyzed a set of 2,000 consecutive posts, often lengthy, submitted in 2000-2001 by over 100 mothers, and I also read many thousands more from later. While these posts are often articulate, as we will see what is left unsaid is very significant. The mothers come from all across North America, and their children were mostly 15 or 16 when first sent to the School.

Gender and class interact in forming the matrix within which these women do their mother work. Most of them live in households with high incomes

earned by two spouses. Given the correlation between upper-middle class income levels and women being married, one significant class effect on their parenting was that they become members of households that could afford to even consider the school for their child.

As they see it, gender does not appear to be a significant determinant of the experience of these mothers. Nobody provided what might be called a feminist analysis of their experiences or situations, one based on recognition of a societal structure of gender inequality. Men as well as women participated and if we altered the pronouns and removed the poster's name, we would have difficulty in guessing the writer's gender. There was little patterned difference in what they wrote about or how they wrote, a fact noted with surprise on the List. While men might write about being "fathers" and women about being "mothers," the word "mother" was almost never used as a verb while "parent" was very frequently so used. Both women and men usually wrote about "parenting" their children. (On the differing connotations of the terms, see Davis, 1999.)

However, a second look showed gender to be a salient dimension, even if unrecognized on the List. Women made almost four times as many posts as men, evidence of their taking more responsibility for the parenting. Another significant gender dimension emerges from considering the gender not of the writer but of her or his child at the school. The top five posters were all mothers, and for four of these their child was a girl. There were about twice as many boys as girls at the school, so that four of the five top posters had girls there is not coincidental. (Statistically, the odds of this happening purely by chance are less than one percent.) Beyond mothers taking more responsibility for parenting in general they get more involved with daughters than sons, reproducing gender inequality.

Accounting for the separation

These women embrace the role of mother and construct the physical separation of their child as necessary to bridge the existing psychological and emotional chasm between parents and child; the child's life as well as the mother's deeper lasting relationship with her child required bridging that gap. "You gotta let go if you want to hang on." This line from an original poem submitted to the List expresses an understanding shared by the mothers. For them, sending their child to EG-School was not a choice but a last resort. Their commitment to the child's wellbeing meant that they were constrained to do whatever necessary to keep him or her safe. Over and over, messages say, "EG-School saved my child's life!" Often, this is elaborated and the message states that without the school, the child would likely either be dead or in jail, the two outcomes seemingly equally undesirable. For List members the crucially important "distance" that separated them from their children was not the physical and geographic one while the children were away at EG-School but rather the emotional and psychological estrangement that preceded it and in

effect made it necessary. The children had to be set apart in terms of geography in order to bring them closer to parents in all the more important ways.

Accounts of the child's behavior before going to EG-School regularly use the metaphor of hell, "our home was a living hell." Descriptions of the hell can be found throughout the List, from parents' first posts introducing themselves and seeking reassurance, to accounts of what children disclosed in "coming clean" at the school, all the way to reports from parents farther along the program about how their children have changed or how much they still have to work on. Before being sent to EG-School most of the children were "out of control," another frequently used phrase. The list is replete with reports of the following behaviors: persistent drug or alcohol abuse; profanity-laden diatribes directed at parents or (more rarely) other authority figures; outbursts of rage with frequent destruction of property; defiance of parental authority expressed in myriad ways such as driving recklessly, sometimes while underage and unlicensed and while high or drunk, or running away, or girls being sexually promiscuous. School problems were almost always part of the mix of unacceptable behaviors. There were frequent reports of the child's grades quite suddenly beginning a steep downward spiral after earlier years as a top student. In all these situations, the child's cheating, lying, and dishonesty was a central part of the "hell." Complicating this entire picture for many was that their child had been diagnosed with one or more of a half-dozen different conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity (ADHD), Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), or others, and had had sometimes many years of medication and counseling. Each individual teenager had a unique story, of course, but parents often responded to some new parent's story by claiming that the newcomer's child was just like their own.

While extensive descriptions of children's undesirable conduct were common, explanations of that behavior were more rarely offered and then sometimes only in almost off-hand comments. "She became the brat I made her," wrote one mother without further elaboration. A few pointed fingers at others, especially ex-spouses, or mentioned their child's inherited predisposition to alcoholism or other addictions. Most parents described extensive but fruitless efforts to find explanations for their child's behavior. These statements illustrate the "selective denial" (Gustafson, 2005b: 42) that women can use to resist being labeled by self or others as a bad mother. Anxiety, pain, worry, exhaustion, fear—terms such as these were in nearly every account of the period before the child started at EG-School. For many, the day they had their child taken away was "the worst day of their lives."

Few can be unaffected by the message that children are products of their parenting. Mothers especially are likely to be judged by reference to a cultural ideal that sees a good mother as "preternaturally attuned to her children's needs" (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky, 1998: 6), and "omnicompetent, omnipresent, benevolent and selfless" (Davis, 1999: 251). Avoiding in-depth discussion of

reasons for the child's misconduct is one way mothers (and fathers) can maintain acceptable self-identities. EG-School validated the mothers as good parents by emphasizing that many of the children come from homes where siblings were high-achieving and well-behaved. "We may not be perfect parents but we are good enough and we do everything we know how to save our child," was a conspicuous theme.

If the parents are normal and good enough and their children are not to be blamed (see below), then how account for the problems? One way was to portray the child as unusually special. One parent used the phrase "severely gifted" and referred to "the problems talented kids face who don't fit the expectations of others." Another tack was to describe the difficulties kids faced in growing up today with bureaucratic schools, pervasive media images of violence and materialism, and easily available drugs, and then to admit that "we couldn't keep our child safe." Sending him or her to EG-School was necessary to keep the child safe, the *sine qua non* for any success as a parent. In the mothers' view this was their way of embracing the role of parent, with all the responsibility that implied for self-abnegation and sacrifice. List members adamantly reject any suggestion that they abdicated their parental responsibilities.

We didn't send our kids away to get fixed or throw up our hands saying "I don't know what else to do with him/her, you do it!"

Though nobody on the list recognized it, the program at EG-School can be seen as a systematic attempt, in a safer setting, at the "concerted cultivation" of their children characteristic of middle as opposed to working class parents. (Lareau, 2003).

The good child and parenthood as moral transformation

Sociologist Sharon Hays (1996) asked mothers of preschoolers to describe the differences between a "good" and a "bad" child, and was told repeatedly that there was no bad child. By their very nature children were good. This was also the view of parents in this study. Despite their children's often illegal, destructive, violent, and dangerous behaviors, parents did not see them as evil or bad. They had made bad choices but there was a distinction to be made between the child and his or her behavior. The children were not written off. These parents, confronted with the undesirable behavior, focused on the potential within their child and sought a way to nurture the good they assumed was present. Faith in the good child, the "emotionally priceless even if economically worthless child," (Zelizer, 1985), the "sacred child" (Hays, 1996), was pervasive. The mothers accepted responsibility to give the child life not just in a physical sense but in a fuller sense of giving him or her the foundation to have a meaningful, satisfying, fulfilling life of his or her own. A lasting deep relationship with parents would be part of such a life. Repairing and strengthening the mother-child bond that had been shattered by the child's behavior before EG-School was

a reason for sending their children to this school, although getting the child somewhere safe was a more urgent reason.

Our kids are not defective... They just hurt.... And their (and our) hurts are ... being healed.

Parents proudly reported successes to the List, eliciting congratulations from other members who used positive outcomes to keep up their own hopes and faith in the program, in themselves as parents, and in their children. The language of new life for the child is very frequently combined with a statement that “EG-School gave me my child back” and the two formulations are intermingled as if one implied the other. It is as if for these parents, a “new life” for the child necessarily implied a restoration of the parent/child relationship.

“Dominant representations of women’s character.... so tie women to caring, and in particular to caring for their own children, that it becomes unthinkable for a woman not to act in a responsible way toward her child—to be an irresponsible mother” (McMahon, 1995: 159; Gustafson 2005b). There is abundant evidence on the list to support but also to qualify this claim. The women certainly draw upon such cultural representations in constructing their identities. They sent their children to EG-School because they cared; because they cared, they knew they were good mothers. However, fathers on the List too endorsed this view of parenting and, like mothers, applied it to both women and men. (But of course, fewer fathers participated.) If we study women only, we are blind to at least some men’s receptivity to similar cultural messages.

Some mothers on the list argued that they were not only good mothers but even better than others precisely because of the difficulties they faced to save their children. In a study of another group of middle to upper-middle class mothers who encountered unanticipated roadblocks on their parenthood journey, Helène Ragone (1994, 1997) showed how infertile women who hired surrogates to have babies for them came to see themselves as mothers in a more fundamental sense than if they had given birth. The baby was conceived in her heart before it could be conceived in the surrogate’s womb, was how they conceptualized this “deeper” motherhood. Similarly, some women in this study saw themselves as ultimately better mothers than those who hadn’t been tested by the detour and the struggle along the alternative route. The parents could take more satisfaction for standing by the child through the hard journey. “Like climbing a mountain, raising an EG-School child, brought deeper satisfaction because of the hard trial involved,” said one mother. “The harder they (kids) fell, the greater the rise,” wrote another. Another mother, describing a visit with her EG-School child wrote:

Our kids have matured so much, have come so far. I wish our other children had the ability, or the inclination to talk to us the way our EG-School kids do!

The mothers saw parenthood as an ongoing relationship, a continuing journey. A couple reporting that their EG-School son was entering college put "End of the Tunnel" on the Subject line of their post but started their message by writing, "But it's the start of a new journey." That particular post was greeted with a great deal of jubilation on the List because it encapsulated some of the most relevant and meaningful issues for parents. It highlighted the child's journey to redemption and new life through EG-School and other institutions. The son, two years clean and sober, was off to college after a childhood filled with ADHD and

- 1 suicide attempt
- 2 arrests
- 3 years of drug abuse
- 4 high schools
- 5 treatment facilities and EG-School
- 27 months away from home
- 2 frazzled siblings
- 2 almost exhausted parents, and
a second mortgage.

Messages such as this one had a very important role in enabling mothers to allay any doubts they might harbor that they were doing the best for their children. They justified their sending their child away to EG-School and gave them hope for a successful outcome. Among the many congratulatory replies was one from a mother who said she would keep the message and read it over and over for inspiration.

Gendered parenting?

Hays described mothers of preschoolers who believed that children by their very nature required intensive parenting. Because they considered men incompetent as parents (Hays 1996: 101-103), by default they were committed to intensive mothering. This study provides evidence both to confirm and to question some aspects of Hays' thesis. We have already noted that parents here wholeheartedly accept the "sacred child" ideology. However, there is little evidence that women in this study consider men, as men, incompetent parents. Some mothers reported they had earlier believed this but had changed their understanding. There is no patterned assumption on the List that mothers make better parents. Perhaps the ages of the children involved, teenagers in this study as opposed to preschoolers in Hays' research, is one reason for the difference. A more likely explanation, however, is that given the challenges and problems their children presented, mothers could not assume the unquestioned identity of competent parent. If anything, the children's "struggles" raised doubts about the competence of all involved, mothers as well as fathers.

Despite this evidence of mothers explicitly rejecting the assumption

that women make better parents, one likely factor contributing to the gender inequality in participation on the list already noted is the implicit notion that “mothering” more than “fathering” requires the physical presence of one’s child. This long-established “separate spheres” ideology shapes the experiences even of the “successful” relatively well-off women in this study. Being physically separated from their children is much more a threat to the identity of a “good mother” than to that of a “good father.” Thus with more to lose, the women were more involved in maintaining their mother status and identity; communicating on the List was one way to do that. In the process, they reproduce the cultural construction of mothers as either “good” or “bad,” while their social class advantages and a safe setting allow them to position themselves on the “good” side; they never challenge the accuracy of this too simple binary. Even while rejecting the understanding of parenting as women’s work, these mothers do not transcend the cultural construction of “good” mothering.

Other explanations may be proposed for the different rates of participation on the list. Deborah Tannen (1990) argued that women’s communication patterns emphasize “rapport” while men’s stress “report,” but her critics have documented that both women and men are capable of using either style and that which one they use is a function of power in a given situation (see Kimmel, 2000: 12ff). It might be argued that women are more likely to engage in “emotion work” of the type that leads them to connect with others through the list and to seek emotional intimacy through sharing their stories (Hochschild, 1982). Notice, however, that any such alternative explanation of men’s lower participation rates on the List ultimately resorts to saying that a structure of gender inequality is still operative, only in some other way, affecting if not effecting the lives of these middle-class and professional mothers. Exceptional in being middle-class mothers separated from their children, they are the exceptions that prove the rule about the power of ideology.

¹All the evidence in this chapter that is not otherwise attributed comes from parents’ posts to the list. Longer quotations are indented while shorter phrases are included between quotation marks.

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Mothering *Perspectives from African American, West Indian and Latina Adolescents*

This research deconstructs the ways in which adolescent parenthood has traditionally been studied and shifts the focus onto parenting itself. The investigation employs the multiracial feminist framework for understanding the dynamics of teenage pregnancy for African American, West Indian and Latin mothers. Departing from investigations that define teenage pregnancy as pathological and immoral, this research approaches it as a symptom or byproduct of particular social conditions and as a socially relevant family form. The objective was to examine how race, ethnicity and cultural identity influence mothering. Through twenty-three in-depth interviews, the major findings revealed that the experience of motherhood was perceived as more alike than different from other mothers regardless of variations in age, race, ethnicity or class. These young mothers feel that while their cultural customs and access to resources may vary across cultural and class lines, their mothering practices remain comparable. The assumption is that mothers want to be their best and have the best for their children regardless of cultural identity. Further, they face similar challenges in getting the fathers of their children to fully participate in the rearing of their children.

This investigation articulates the experiences of families typically devalued by the ideology of the family as a bounded unit centered on an "adult" married couple. The data can inform the public discourse on adolescent childbearing and parenting and assist in identifying community assets that can offer viable solutions specific enough to the populations studied (i.e. culturally appropriate) and general enough for all parenting mothers.

Introduction and background

Western industrialized countries experienced a declining trend in births to teens during the period of 1970 to 2000 (AGI, 2002). However, among developed nations, the United States continues to have substantially higher

rates of both pregnancies and births to adolescents. To illustrate, consider the fact that the adolescent pregnancy rate in the United States is nearly twice that of Canada and Great Britain and approximately five times that in Germany and France (Kaufmann, et al., 1998). Research shows that the different rates in teen pregnancies are not attributed to teens engaging in less sexual intercourse among these countries; instead, the distinction lies in regular contraceptive use (Trussell, 1988). American adolescents are less likely to receive recurring, comprehensive sex education information, to have adequate access to contraception and other forms of reproductive health care, and to receive free contraceptive products (Trussell 1988; Berne and Huberman 1999).

While the birth rates to adolescents vary greatly from state to state, Connecticut, the state in which this research took place, has pregnancy and birth rates comparable to U.S. national trends. According to 2000 data, Connecticut ranked 33 in the nation for rates of pregnancy, birth and abortion per 1000 women aged 15-19 (AGI, 2004). In 1997, Hartford, Connecticut had the highest teen birth rate of any city in the nation, 114 births per 1,000 teens (Gruendel, 2001) (see Tables 1 and 2 for details). Further, Hartford ranked among the highest in the state for repeat teen births (Connecticut State Department of Public Health, 2001). Hartford's teen birth rate has improved, but it remains high. In 1999, across the three Hartford high schools, there were more teen girls who gave birth than graduated (Hartford Department of Public Health, 2001). The high rate of teenage pregnancy makes Hartford a viable place to learn more about teenage motherhood and learn what other moms may be experiencing in similar locations.

Theory

This investigation departs from previous studies in three key ways. First, previous studies tend to define teenage pregnancy as pathological and immoral. This investigation explores teen pregnancy as a byproduct of particular social conditions and arrangements. As an extension of this concept, the second contribution of this work is that it examines teenage moms and their children as a socially relevant family form. This conceptual shift departs from other investigations that rely on rigid definitions of family. Third, racial and ethnic groups are not treated as homogeneous classifications. In previous studies, groups such as Blacks and Latinas are treated as if they have one unifying experience. In this analysis, it is the heterogeneity of women that is implicit and therefore explored.

The primary objective is to learn how Black and Latin adolescent mothers conceptualize and "do" mothering and whether there are differences that can be attributed to racial and ethnic background. In other words, what does motherhood mean to these teens, how do they define motherhood, what child-rearing arrangements do they prescribe? While motherhood is primarily constructed as a practice that involves, "large quantities of money, . . . professional-level skills and copious amounts of physical, moral, mental, and emotional energy on the

part of the individual mother” (Hays, 1996:4), there are many variants to this definition distinguished by race, ethnicity, and class (Hill Collins, 1994; Dill, 1988). To explore these matters, an extended feminist framework, multiracial feminism, is employed.

Multiracial feminism draws its premise from feminist theory in general and Black Feminist theory specifically (Thompson, 2002; Hill Collins, 1990; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981). It is an attempt to correct for the critiques of both models by providing a more comprehensive framework. This framework seeks to unite the various aspects of feminisms, particularly feminisms of color, by paying specific attention to race and racism as a “primary force situating genders differently” (Baca Zinn and Dill, 1996: 321). Multiracial feminism involves (1) criticizing dichotomous oppositional thinking; (2) recognizing the simultaneity of oppression *and* struggle; (3) avoiding additive analyses for multiplicative investigations; and (4) adopting a standpoint epistemology (Brewer, 1993: 16). Subsequently, the impact of class cannot be sufficiently understood decontextualized from race anymore than race issues can be fully understood decontextualized from gender. This investigation addresses these aspects. For example, to avoid a racial dichotomy and pay attention to the heterogeneity of groups, Latin and Black women are the foci. Further, each participant was asked to identify their specific racial and/or ethnic background rather than assume similar histories. The focus also specifically de-centers the normative comparison of white, middle-class mothers to everyone else.

Methods

This research uses the in-depth interview, a qualitative research technique. As Blaikie (2000) asserts, the goal in qualitative research is to get an “insider view” of what is occurring. To interpret and explain the social phenomenon, the actors’ frame of reference needs detailed investigation (Burgess 1984). The use of qualitative methods allows for a fuller, more flexible process that is particularly sensitive to the social context, subsequently, affording a better understanding and representation of the experiences of this understudied population. Intensive interviews were conducted with 23 Black and Latin adolescent mothers. According to Lofland and Lofland (1995), in-depth interviews put the researcher in the unique position of “looking, listening and asking” all at the same time. Throughout the interview process, field notes were taken so that unclear or incomplete information could be revisited and to record any observations noticed during the interview. Young mothers were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling.

A demographic summary of the adolescents who participated is shown in Tables 3-6. The Latin mothers were on average one year older than the Black participants at the time of the interview; however they varied only slightly in average age at birth of first child: 16.1 versus 16.8 years. A more noticeable difference occurs in the number of repeat births. The Latin mothers had a total of 21 children and two pregnancies compared to 15 children for the Black teen

mothers: 2.3 average number of children compared to 1.1. There were also differences between the cultures in current employment, and educational status. The Black moms were more likely to be employed at least part time (n=3/10 Latinas and 9/13 Blacks), but similarly likely to receive state assistance (n=8/10 Latinas and 7/13 Blacks), which included, but was not limited to health insurance for their children. Further, the Latin teenage mothers were less likely to have a high school diploma or equivalent, less likely to be pursuing it and less likely to be in pursuit of higher education than the African American and West Indian teenage mothers (3/10 Latinas with high school education and 3/10 pursuing GED, 0/10 pursuing higher education compared to 7/13 Black teens with high school or equivalent diplomas, 6/10 pursuing high school diplomas and 6/13 pursuing higher education or specialized training).

Each interview was audio taped and transcribed to conduct a textual analysis. After reading and re-reading transcripts and going through the process of open, axial and selective data coding, themes began to emerge. Based on emerging patterns, categories were developed. These categories are “concepts, derived from data that stand for phenomena” (Strauss and Corbin, 2002: 114).

Results

Widespread descriptions of the family and mothering experiences are not actually shared by all mothers. As documented in the literature (Miller and Browning, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Hill Collins, 1994; Dill, 1994), the ways in which mothering gets defined and practiced has many variants. When factors such as class, race, ethnicity, age and region, to name a few, are taken into account, the meaning of family and motherhood and how the act of mothering is accomplished can be very different. The perceived significance of the teenagers’ identity as African American, West Indian or Latin was explored as a basis for investigating how racial and ethnic identity influences perceptions of mothering and mothering practices. In other words, did the teenagers perceive differences by race and ethnicity in how they conceived and achieved mothering? Overall, racial and ethnic identity was important to the individual moms; however, it was not explicitly influential in how the teens viewed motherhood. Most of the teenagers did not see significant differences between themselves and mothers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Further, while the majority of the mothers incorporate some cultural customs in their parenting styles, these traditions were used intermittently and they were reflective of many cultures: not simply their own.

Racial and ethnic identity

To explore how the teens identified racially and ethnically, several questions were posed; the first two involved how the participants racially and ethnically identified and the importance of identity. As Table 7 presents, the majority of respondents (70 percent) described their race or ethnicity as between somewhat and very important to them; the importance of race or ethnicity did not vary

across the respondents. The following are typical quotes from respondents who described their cultural identity as being significant to them.

Lisa: *Damn important. I love being my race.*

Renae: *It means a lot to me. Jamaican is just who I am.*

Tina: *It is very important. You know, they always talking about where we came from, our roots and everything, and that's very important. It's good to know where you came from and, you know, what people had to do for you in order to get here.*

As revealed by the narratives of other moms, racial and ethnic status influenced structural opportunities and general perceptions. These moms may not have consciously realized it, but they were recognizing the effects of racism. Their life chances are influenced by a complex interaction of many factors including their racial and ethnic designation, urban residence, and economic standing. These young women were identifying or rather not identifying the importance of their own racial and ethnic background to themselves as an oppositional stance. In essence, they were asserting that their racial and ethnic status was only important as it relates to discriminatory policies and attitudes of others. For example, Stacy, is motivated to prove them [White Americans] wrong by pursuing higher education and establishing a successful career for herself. Still other moms such as Jamie want to show the world that she is a good mom regardless of being young and Puerto Rican; and both Sherrie and Tara see obstacles strictly because of their Jamaican and African American heritages, and they plan to overcome these challenges. While it may be difficult to specifically name, each of these teens recognize that their life chances are at least in part influenced by their racial and ethnic background. Further, they do not intend to be passive about addressing this issue.

Racial and ethnic background: Influences on mothering

To explore the teenagers' sense of cultural awareness and its importance to their mothering practices, each participant was asked how important their race/ethnicity was in terms of how they raise their children, what cultural customs, if any, they included in their childrearing and whether they felt their parenting was different from mothers with different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The results from these three questions were remarkably consistent. Most of the respondents (61 percent) did not feel that their race or ethnicity shaped their views on motherhood. This finding, however, is inconsistent with the number of teens who stated that their racial and ethnic backgrounds were important to them; 70% affirmed that their racial and ethnic identity was somewhat to very important. Perhaps the teens' reasons for assigning cultural importance contributes to this disconnect between identity and practice.

Most of the teenagers (74 percent) believed that their views on motherhood were similar to mothers of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds. The results are shown in Tables 8 and 9. The mothers were also probed as to what cultural customs they associated with their background and if these were deliberately being passed down to their children. Overall, participants did not provide many specific examples of cultural customs. Most often, the investigator had to prompt the teens by asking about food, language or cultural festivals. Once they received examples, 18 (78 percent) of the teenagers stated that they included some cultural customs in their mothering although the importance of these traditions was ambiguous and the customs did not necessarily reflect their own background. Only nine (39 percent) of the teenagers described these customs in a way in which one might interpret them as being committed to including these in their children's lives on regular basis. These are discussed in more detail below.

For most of the teenage mothers, their race or ethnic background was not perceived as having a significant impact on how they view motherhood. When asked the question, how important is your race or ethnicity to how you raise your children, the response was usually short and to the point. Fourteen of the moms simply said no, their cultural background did not influence their views on motherhood or their ideas about childrearing. However, the follow up inquiries offered more perspective. The teens were asked whether they see themselves as different from mothers who have different racial or ethnic backgrounds than themselves. This question gave the teens a place to clarify or elaborate on their impressions. For example, eighteen-year-old Tasha explains:

It doesn't matter what you are. It should be all the same. It depends on how you grow your child. I know, I grow my child on how I grew up with manners and yes ma'am and no ma'am.

Tasha recognizes that she is incorporating mothering practices used to raise her child, but she does not attribute these practices to any particular race or ethnicity. Similarly, Allison discusses the variation within ethnic groups. Following the multiracial feminist framework, racial and ethnic groups are not assumed to be homogenous in values, beliefs or practices. Allison presents this very idea when she states:

Like I am Puerto Rican and my friend could be Puerto Rican but her family do things differently than my family. So it's like everybody does their own way.

Other participants stressed a variety of factors that they believe are more influential in determining how a person parents than race or ethnicity. These factors include life circumstances, level of support, and determination. In other words, it was the person and how she was managing her environment that most

influenced how she would mother. According to Tara, mothers have varying amounts of support from family, from the child's father and so forth. This difference contributes to how a mom is able to handle the various responsibilities of parenting. Tara talks about how:

Some Puerto Ricans have their mothers to help them out a lot ... some Black people do that too.... I know some people raise their own child who had no help at all and then there are some people that their father takes care of everything and they don't have to do nothing and so I think it all depends on the situation, not ... not their cultural background.

In addition to support, other mothers like Corrine stated that "it all depends on the person." The mom herself is the most important factor in determining how she will mother. Similarly, Aaliyah identified determination and one's response to her environment as influential in shaping motherhood experiences. Aaliyah does not think this determination or willpower is common or infrequent in any particular racial or ethnic group. Again, it all depends on the person and how that person manages life.

I would say that just because I'm African-American because maybe someone else is of a different race, probably thinks, you know, the same way I do. I mean, it all depends on the person and how they think.

I mean, some people just are like "yeah, I'm a mom, but I don't want my kids or I'm going to go give my kids away because of whatever reason" and then there's some that, you know, "this is my child and I'm going to take care of my baby no matter what." ... I would say that it just depends on the person and you know, how they think and like, what they're going through, what's going through their life at the time.

To further stress the idea of motherhood being affected by situation, Morgan, who identifies as African American, states that her mothering practices are influenced by living with and near Puerto Rican families. According to Morgan, she takes care of her house and cooks similarly to the ways the Puerto Rican families in her neighborhood do. However, she does not believe that mothers are essentially different based on their race or ethnicity. The idea of practices versus overall views on mothering is a recurring theme. In fact, when this question is examined differently, it appears that the data displayed in Tables 8 and 9 do not fully disclose what is going on. While there were 17 teenage mothers who specifically stated that they do not believe their views are different from other mothers with different racial and ethnic backgrounds (and these correspond almost precisely with those who stated that their racial or ethnic background does not influence their own views on motherhood), when probed further, it became apparent that something else was at work. It

wasn't necessarily that these teens did not recognize differences especially in terms of specific practices, but rather that they did not think these differences actually mattered. In other words, these teens felt that ultimately, motherhood was motherhood regardless of the ways in which it was manifested. Repeatedly, the teen moms were declaring that yes, I may discipline my child differently or cook different foods, but all things considered, these variations are meaningless. It is the act of mothering and how it is defined that is relevant. It seems these teenagers felt that the role of mother transcends race and ethnicity. As Rosa states, "I think we all look at motherhood the same because we all care for our children." Stacy explained it as follows:

I don't know, I think we all would probably have similar views. We'd all want the same things for our children. I don't think there should be much of a big difference.

I mean, maybe there is a difference in how you raise your child, the details, but when it comes to, you know, that everyone would probably have the same view in what they would want.

The ultimate desire for a promising, successful life for your child was seen as comparable across racial and ethnic lines. The differences were located in the "performance" of mothering. For example, several of the mothers talked about disciplinary differences. Tasha discussed respect and manners being an important part of the Jamaican culture. She felt it necessary for her child to be considerably polite and "mannerable" and not "talk back, smack their mother and all that" which she felt were more acceptable practices in the Puerto Rican community. Instituting corporal punishment to raise respectful children is considered an acceptable, even necessary, part of disciplinary practice among Jamaican families (Brice-Baker, 1996). Similarly, Sherrie who also identified as Jamaican American, emphasized that her daughter needed to have "respect for her elders ... know her place."

In reviewing the complete data, a more accurate representation of how the teens perceived racial and ethnic differences emerged. By probing beyond the initial questions of whether teens perceived that their racial or ethnic heritage influenced their own views on motherhood and others, it became evident that the participants were reticent about differences not because they deny their existence, but because the variations are not perceived as meaningful. These moms suggest that regardless of whether they are Puerto Rican, African American, or West Indian, they face common struggles of discrimination, poverty, neighborhood and personal violence, and lack of support from most of their children's fathers. Further, when analyzing the last item, deficient support from dads, their experiences cross class lines. The intensive mothering concept applies to women of varying economic backgrounds as the responsibilities of mom's are overwhelmingly more challenging than those assigned to dads regardless

of socioeconomic background. These young mothers are asserting that moms get left holding the bag regardless. Subsequently, rather than concentrate on difference, they are more interested in focusing on similarities and perhaps establishing alliances.

Cultural customs used in childrearing

As mentioned above, when asked to give examples of cultural traditions the mothers prescribe to in their parenting, most did not answer without first receiving prompts. Eighteen (78 percent) of the teenage moms provided examples of customs they use in their childrearing. However, not all 18 used these on any regular basis and not all of the customs reflected their own race or ethnic backgrounds. In other words, several of the teenage moms stated that they included traditions intermittently and that a broad, diverse set of customs beyond their own racial and ethnic backgrounds, like food, music, and cultural festivals, were incorporated suggesting a more multi-cultural approach. Tasha discussed listening to “Jamaican music ... Spanish music ... and all kinds of music,” while Kim, Tina, and Aisha discussed cooking and eating foods from their own cultural background as well as others. As Aisha plainly put it “I eat what I like.” Kim described passing on diverse customs: “I be trying to pass on some White traditions, some Black traditions, some ghetto traditions.” This diverse approach may be attributed to the multitude of ethnic festivals and family events sponsored in Hartford as well as numerous supermarkets selling international foods and the ethnically diverse population of the city itself.

Discussion and conclusions

The findings point to two recurring themes: parenting is women’s work and the commonalities among mothers outweigh the differences. In addition, their common perceptions as mothers were more meaningful than differences based on race, ethnicity, age or even class. According to these young women, mothers face the same challenges; they are simply parenting in different contexts and different currencies. In other words, different races and ethnicities may incorporate various cultural customs and have different resources afforded them based on class status, but their mothering remains comparable. The assumption is that mothers want the best for their children *and* they want to provide the best with a caring, active, supportive father. This hope exists regardless of age, race, ethnicity or class status. Allison nicely sums up this idea when she talks about mothering this way: “everybody goes through the same thing. Even if for a different reason or a different situation. Everybody goes through the same thing.”

This finding is significant in two ways. First, at initial glance, it may appear that the experience of sexism as it shapes the structure of the family institution is perceived as the foremost oppressing element. With this interpretation, one might suggest that gender trumps race and ethnicity as the most important factor shaping families. However, that is not exactly the message these women

are presenting. When discussing their own racial and ethnic identity and the ways in which this identity shapes their parenting practices, it is clear that their cultural backgrounds influence their lives in various ways. It is here suggested that when you take all of the narratives into context, a richer picture is revealed. Essentially, the women do recognize structural limitations in the form of racism, sexism, and classism. Further, they specifically are choosing to respond to the “ism” which they feel they have the most power over: sexism as it influences the family. Perhaps this can be referred to as “selective social mobility.” In other words, these teenagers may not feel empowered to combat racism or classism, but they do see a way to “select” and affect one aspect of the patriarchal society by demanding changes from their children’s fathers. The oppressive, labour-intensive role of mother is contrary to the privileged status of fathers who can choose whether to participate in the rearing of their children and how to do so. These teenagers may not feel they can combat sexism publicly on a large scale, but they can certainly do so in their own homes. The teenagers in the study are resisting the traditional definition of family that reinforces their domination by men. Ultimately, this personal fight can infiltrate and shape the larger social institutions.

With few exceptions, the teens did not specifically acknowledge many class or race issues that differentiated them as mothers. Some moms discussed different disciplinary styles and potential support from family members based on race and ethnicity. One teen mom, Kim, did not understand why pregnant White teenagers tended to abort their children because as she put it “their parents will pay for abortions every year. If anything they have more than we have. They have rich parents and you just want to throw your baby in the garbage.” While these examples are few, it does not negate the teenagers’ overall understanding of racial and class elements. For example, the women in this study want a nice house with a backyard; they want quality education for their children. However, without explicitly stating it, they recognize that their opportunity structure is limiting so they have adapted their aspirations accordingly. They desire a nice house in a *safer* part of Hartford rather than a *safe* neighborhood in a suburban or rural area.

While the ideological construction of teenage pregnancy is racialized by experts and the media which concentrate on women of color as young (and therefore deviant) mothers, the mothering experiences of these women is not uncommon. The young, African American, West Indian and Latin women appreciated the shared or collective experiences of motherhood with other women as shaped by a patriarchal system. Mothers, particularly but not limited to single mothers, were viewed as having similar struggles related to childrearing in spite of differing cultural backgrounds, age, and socioeconomic class. Subsequently, the most meaningful recommendation involves shifting the center. By approaching teenage pregnancy and young motherhood (1) from the perspectives of young mothers and (2) outside a framework of social pathology, more effective programs can be developed and structural inequi-

ties addressed. By understanding parenting as a social construction within patriarchal constraints, the model can be deconstructed and rebuilt in a manner beneficial to both mothers and fathers. The mothers from this study and beyond are calling for more equitable responsibilities as related to parenting. For this to occur, however, we need to closely examine the family institution and its location within a capitalist system. The current economy has made it increasingly difficult for parents to have one person at home while the other is in the workforce. More two-parent families require that both parents work. This change translates into even less time for the labour-intensive mothering defined as ideal. For single mothers who are employed, the time constraints are even more arduous. Exploring ways to redefine the roles of parents and providing services to support them in these positions is pertinent.

As with all research, there are limitations and it is important to acknowledge and address these potential biases. For this research, limitations emerge in (1) the population under investigation; (2) recruiting methods; and (3) general restrictions to qualitative research. First, the decision to focus on teenage mothers is at the exclusion of fathers. Their stories are certainly important and can expand the understanding of parenting in general. Recruitment represents the second limitation. The interviewees were identified initially through a parenting support program and then by snowballing. These techniques may indicate that the individuals who agreed to participate are potentially different from other adolescent mothers. The potential differences cannot be known unless a number of adolescent mothers are recruited in different ways. Finally, while qualitative data is valuable in extracting new concepts and delving into the experiences of groups, because of the type of data collection, the total number of participants is relatively small and the data is not generalizable to whole populations.

Future research can overcome these limitations in several ways. Expanding the recruitment efforts to include more ways of tapping into mothers, increasing the number of participants, adding a longitudinal element and expanding the study to include fathers would all be valuable enhancements to the literature. Learning more about how young fathers conceptualize fathering and their relationship to the mother would provide useful insight into this topic.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Teen Pregnancy County Birth Statistics, 2000

State & County	Total Number of Births in County	Total Number of Births to Teens in County	Percent of Total Births to Teens in County
Connecticut-Hartford	11,262	1,111	9.9%

Table 2: Teen Birth Rate for Hartford County, 1999-2001

Hartford County Town	Number of Girls Ages 15-17	Number of Births	Rate per 1,000
Avon	939	-	-
Berlin	1,149	-	-
Bloomfield	1,020	17	16.7
Bristol	3,354	62	18.5
Burlington	534	-	-
Canton	525	-	-
East Granby	300	-	-

East Hartford	2,784	72	25.9
East Windsor	525	-	-
Enfield	2,544	19	7.5
Farmington	1,410	-	-
Glastonbury	1,869	-	-
Granby	651	-	-
Hartford	8,472	523	61.7
Hartland	192	-	-

Table 3: Age and Number of Children for Latina Adolescent Mothers

Interviewee	Age at time of Interview	Age at birth of first child	Total number of children	Race or Ethnicity
Maria	22	15	3	Puerto Rican
Nora	20	18	2 and pregnant	Puerto Rican
Corrine	22	15	3	Puerto Rican
Jamie	19	15	1	Puerto Rican
Carla	21	17	1 and pregnant	Puerto Rican
Lisa	17	16	2 twins)	Puerto Rican
Rosa	21	17	2	Puerto Rican
Allison	23	17	2	Puerto Rican
Mary	22	15	3	Puerto Rican
Aida	19	16	2	Puerto Rican
	Average age at time of interview =20.6	Average age at birth of first child= 16.1	Average number of children = 2.3 not including pregnancies)	

Interviewee	Age at time of interview	Age at birth of first child	Total number of children	Race or Ethnicity
Kim	17 (E)	16	1	African American
Aaliyah	22	16	2	African American
Tina	20	16	1	African American
Tara	17	15	1	African American
Morgan	20	17	1	African American
Stacy	22	19	1	African American
Aisha	23	17	1	African American
Anne	21	18	1	Jamaican Am.
Jodi	22	18	2	Haitian American
Maya	19	18	1	Jamaican Am.
Tasha	18	17	1	Jamaican Am.
Sherrie	17	16	1	Jamaican Am.
Renae	17 (E)	16	1	Jamaican Am.
	Average at time of interview = 19.5	Average age at birth of first child = 16.8	Average number of children = 1.1	

*The letter "E" in parenthesis indicates that the teenager was an emancipated adult.

Table 5: Basic Demographics for Latina Adolescent Mothers

Interviewee	Working hours per week	Receives State Assistance	High School Education and beyond	Current relationship with child's dad
Maria	Yes 15-20 hrs	No	No, last grade completed = 9	Yes, with father of 3 rd child
Nora	No	Yes	Yes, GED	No
Corrine	No	Yes	No last grade completed = 11	Yes, with father of 3 rd child
Jamie	Yes 15-20 hrs	No	No, currently in Adult Ed.	No
Carla	No	Yes	No, last grade completed = 9	No
Lisa	No	Yes	No, last grade completed = 9	No
Rosa	No	Yes	Yes, GED	No
Allison	No	Yes	No, currently in Adult Ed.	No
Mary	Yes 10-15 hrs	Yes	Yes, GED, currently in Comm. College	Yes, with father of 3 rd child
Aida	No	Yes	No, currently in Adult Ed.	No
	3/10 work at least part time	8/10 receive state assistance	3/10 have HS ed. 3/10 are in GED program	0/10 with father of first child 3/10 with father of 3 rd child

Interviewee	Working hours per week	Receives State Assistance	High School Education and beyond	Current relationship with child's dad
Kim	Yes, 15-40 hrs	Yes	No, currently in 12 th grade	Yes
Aaliyah	Yes, 30 hrs	No	Yes, GED	Yes
Tina	Yes, 35-40 hrs	Yes	Yes, currently in Comm. College	No
Tara	Yes, 10-15 hrs	Yes	No, currently in 12 th grade	No
Morgan	No	Yes	Yes, GED, currently in Comm. College	No
Stacy	Yes, 30-35 hrs	No	Yes, currently in 4 year college	No
Aisha	No	Yes	Yes, currently in medical training	No
Anne	Yes, 32-40 hrs	Yes	Yes, currently in Comm. College	No
Jodi	Yes, 20 hrs	No	Yes, currently in Comm. College	No
Maya	No	No	No, currently in 12 th grade	Yes
Tasha	Yes, 20-30 hrs	No	No, currently in 12 th grade	Yes
Sherrie	No	Yes	No, currently in 12 th grade	No
Renae	Yes, 40 hrs	No	No, currently in 12 th grade	Yes
	9/13 work at least part-time	7/13 receive state assistance	7/13 have HS education; 6/13 are in HS	5/13 with father of child

Table 7: Importance of Racial/Ethnic Identity

Racial/ Ethnic Identity	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Puerto Rican	3	4	3
African American	3	1	3
West Indian	3	2	1
	9 (39%)	7 (31%)	7 (30%)

Table 8: Do You Think Your Racial/Ethnic Heritage Influences Your Views on Motherhood?

Racial/ Ethnic Identity	Yes or somewhat influence	No influence	I don't know
Puerto Rican	3	6	1
African American	1	6	0
West Indian	3	2	1
	7 (30%)	14 (61%)	2 (9%)

Table 9: Do You Think Your Views on Motherhood are Similar to Those of Other Racial or Ethnic Groups?

Racial/ Ethnic Identity	Yes or somewhat similar	Not similar	I don't know
Puerto Rican	10	0	0
African American	6	0	1
West Indian	1	4	1
	17 (74%)	4 (17%)	2 (9%)

Breaking the Silence

Infertility, Motherhood, and Queer Culture

Narratives of infertility are neglected in our culture, and those of queer folks are further marginalized. Access to sperm is commonly believed to be the only obstacle lesbians face when trying to conceive, and yet it is not necessarily their only one. Queer experiences of infertility are innately different from those of heterosexuals due to the fact that we are “in a heterosexist society that questions [lesbians’] entitlement to [seek] motherhood in the first place” (Wojnar and Swanson, 2006: 8). Moreover, the literature and popular culture seem to lack the understanding that queer individuals may experience conditions of infertility. This is problematic as not only do the queer stories of infertility become erased, but it also perpetuates a belief among queer individuals that they are completely fertile. Unfortunately, queer folks are more at risk for and experience some conditions of infertility more often than heterosexuals. This article investigates the importance of studying queer experiences of infertility in a heterosexist, pronatalist, medicalized society, and particularly the link between infertility, motherhood, and queer bodies.

“The idea of erasure is important to feminist and postcolonialist literary theory and cultural studies. Erasure is not exactly oppression or suppression, but rather being eliminated from the field of language, not being heard. Certain narratives are told over and over, making some realities visible while erasing others. This process is at the heart of political struggles over defining the canon and who gets to be part of the official story and who does not.” (Agigian, 2004: 51)

Between July 2004 and March 2005, while interviewing ten queer couples about their experiences of birthing in British Columbia,¹ three of the couples expressed narratives of infertility. Two of these couples disclosed that the non-

biological mother of their children had attempted to conceive without success, and the third couple told me at length about their almost six year journey of trying to conceive their first child, finally being successful using *in vitro* fertilization. In stark contrast to the joyful stories of birth that characterized the majority of my interviews, the narratives involving experiences of infertility were quite solemn, despite the fact that all of the couples now had children in their families.

Narratives of infertility are neglected in our culture, and those of queer folks are further marginalized. Access to sperm is commonly believed to be the only obstacle that lesbians face when trying to conceive, and yet it is not necessarily their only one. Queer experiences of infertility are innately different from those of heterosexuals due to the fact that we are “in a heterosexist society that questions [lesbians’] entitlement to [seek] motherhood in the first place” (Wojnar and Swanson, 2006: 8). Jaquelyne Luce (2002) explains:

The chapters on lesbians in books on reproductive technologies address the issue of lesbian parenting and the reality that lesbians do become parents by donor insemination. However, the processes and actual experiences of lesbians trying to become pregnant and/or parents are not the subjects of analyses. Thus, we have no sense of how many lesbians would have, like the presumably straight women using technology, faced difficulties conceiving or sustaining a pregnancy. (15)

This lack of acknowledgement and recognition of infertile queer folks was further demonstrated in my own experiences seeking services at a Vancouver fertility clinic, where nothing (image or printed word) reflected the fact that this clinic serves queer individuals and couples. It is no wonder that feelings of isolation prevail among lesbians “following a miscarriage, a late-term abortion, or [when experiencing] difficulties conceiving” (Luce, 2002: 49–50). This lack of acknowledgement of queer experiences of infertility is the focus of this article. More specifically, this article begins to address the importance of this representational absence of queer infertility by considering how Western culture’s notions of compulsory motherhood and the medicalization of (in)fertility—both steeped in sexist and heterosexist stereotypes—relate to the queer body and its apparent predisposition of being more susceptible to particular conditions of infertility. I argue that these ideas are important to consider not only for queer individuals, who undoubtedly most explicitly experience the effects of queer infertility, but also more generally for queer and Western cultures in order to revisit prominent assumptions regarding motherhood, reproduction, kinship, sexuality, and gender.

Compulsory motherhood

While certainly not as pronatalist as they once were, western societies still often define women by their relationship to motherhood (Greil, 2002;

Letherby and Williams, 1999; Miall, 1994; Whiteford and Gonzalez, 1995; Woollett, 1991). Anne Woollett (1991) notes:

The meanings, practices and ideologies around motherhood are salient not only for mothers but also for childless women and those with fertility problems. Motherhood is important in all women's lives, whether or not they are or want to be mothers, because women are defined in terms of their relationship to motherhood. Women who do not become mothers are viewed negatively and have to account for their failure to achieve or their rejection of a social position to which, it is assumed, all heterosexual women in stable relationships aspire. (62)

In Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen's (2005) study of infertility in Denmark, she found that, "Several women felt that their own mothers did not consider them as real and responsible adults, because they had not yet made the transition into motherhood" (77). This expectation to become a mother is, however, seemingly not applicable to all women.

For many years, a prevalent notion in Western societies was that gay people do not want to have children and cannot biologically parent within same-sex relationships (Berger, 2000; Nelson, 1996; Slater, 1995). An innate infertility is and was seen to strike lesbian and gay relationships, due to the fact that our embodied selves cannot physically procreate within same-sex relationships. While queer folks can "get assistance" from those outside our relationships, our genetic materials will not, in and of themselves, merge to create a human being. This has been one of the arguments used against our relationships, marriages, and parental rights—gay and lesbian relationships do not lead to biological offspring (Agigian, 2004; Lewin, 1993; Nelson, 1996; Owen, 2001).

With the "gayby boom" of the last 30 years, many queer activists have gone to great lengths to prove our abilities both to become parents as well as to provide appropriate care for our children (Arnup, 1995; Owen, 2001; Slater, 1995). Queer folks have begun to be perceived differently with respect to their relationship to parenthood. For example, while 30 years ago it was not uncommon to perceive "lesbian motherhood" as a "contradictory," "dichotomous," and "oxymoron[ic]" phrase, by heterosexuals and queers alike (Berger, 2000; Lewin, 1993; Muzio, 1999; Slater, 1995), Kath Weston (1997) has pointed out that, "Are you planning to have kids?" has become a routine question directed at lesbian couples, even by heterosexual friends" (xiv). Over the last ten years in particular, various governments in Canada have passed legislation, thus recognizing the predominance, abilities, and rights of gay and lesbian parents. In most provinces, queer folks can legally adopt children, and in British Columbia Québec, Ontario, and Manitoba, two women can be listed as "parents" on birth certificates² (Epstein, 2005; Greenbaum, Hendricks and Piyalé-Sheard, 2002; Séguin, 2002; Wente, 2007).

Despite the legal changes, prominent notions regarding who should and should not be a mother still permeate our society, and reflect underlying social stereotypes of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and dis/ability, among other prejudices. Gayle Letherby and Catherine Williams (1999) note

...that the desire of a lesbian or disabled woman who wants a child is likely to be questioned in a way that an able-bodied heterosexual woman's is not. In these circumstances, a woman's inability or 'choice' not to have children may be welcomed by other people rather than defined as sad or selfish in the ways we have experienced, while women subject to racism face further complications. (727)

While it is illegal in Canada to discriminate or withhold publicly medical services based on race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, or dis/ability, American doctors "have typically maintained their right to do so" (Agigian, 2004: 57; also Mamó, 2002). Amy Agigian (2004) elaborates:

Although some physicians continue to 'hold the line' against lesbian AI, others have changed their practices over the years in the direction of equality for lesbians, sometimes stopping short, however, of equal access. (63)

Moreover, clinics and doctors can and do (consciously or subconsciously) make their offices and services not queer-friendly by refraining from publicly discussing or displaying any image or material referencing queer individuals or couples. Not surprisingly, this lack of acknowledgement fits well within the history of medicalization and infertility.

Infertility and its medicalization

The historical and social context from which fertility treatments and the diagnosis of "infertility" have emerged—a context that has become increasingly medicalized—must be understood to completely comprehend the present context and debates. Medicalization "describes a process by which nonmedical problems become defined and treated as medical problems, usually in terms of illnesses or disorders" (Conrad, 1992: 209). Bryan Turner (1995) explains that the medicalization of society involved: "the growth of medical dominance under the auspices of the state, associated with the development of a professional body of knowledge" (208), and "a regulation and management of populations and bodies in the interests of a discourse which identifies and controls that which is normal" (210). While diverse bodies, conditions, and contexts exist, they are all compared to the "norm", and "[s]tanding for normality ... is [often] the white, heterosexual, youthful, middle-class, masculine body" (Lupton, 2000: 58). This undoubtedly sexist and heterosexist medicalized gaze has resulted in increased control over women's and queer bodies (Agigian, 2004; Inhorn,

1994; Luce, 2002; Mamo, 2002; Martin, 2001).

Agigian (2004) notes that, “women’s bodies have been pathologized and treated as inherently sick or sickening depending in the women’s socioeconomic status” (38) and “the medical profession has rarely hesitated to pathologize lesbians as both physiologically and psychologically ill” (46). Nowhere have women been medically managed more than in terms of their relationship to reproduction.

Childbirth and other issues related to reproduction, are often cited as the primary sites of medicalization (Conrad, 1992; Davis-Floyd, 2003; Davis-Floyd and Sargent, 1997; Martin, 2001; Parry, 2004).

[F]eminist scholars and activists argue that nowhere has the medical model been more invasive and harmful than in issues connected to women including pregnancy, childbirth, birth control, abortion, surrogacy arrangements and the mapping of the human genome (Woliver). (Parry, 2004:81)

Marcia Inhorn (1994) explains, “[t]hat women’s bodies are considered the locus of ‘disease’, and hence the site of anxious surveillance and intervention, is apparent in all of these studies of infertility” (460). But how did infertility become medicalized, or as Agigian (2004) asks, “At the risk of belaboring the obvious: Since when has childlessness been an illness?” (49).

Theorists note the switch from childlessness being a social to a medical phenomenon occurred somewhere between the 1960s and 1980s. Linda Whiteford and Lois Gonzalez (1995) explain that:

The development of infertility as a medical condition [was] dependent on medical advances in the understanding of human endocrinology and medical technology. Until the 1950s infertility was often thought of as emotional, rather than medical in origin. Not until the 1960s and 1970s, when the development of synthetic drugs allowed physicians to control ovulatory cycles and the technology of laparoscopy allowed them to see women’s internal reproductive biology, did infertility become medicalized. (29)

In a similar vein, Margarete Sandelowski and Sheryl de Lacey (2002) note that:

Infertility was ‘invented’ with the in vitro conception and birth in 1978 of Baby Louise. That is, in the spirit and language of the Foucauldian-inspired ‘genealogical method’ (Armstrong, 1990), infertility was discovered—or, more precisely, discursively created (Armstrong, 1986; Arney & Bergen, 1984)—when *in*-fertility became possible. Whereas barrenness used to connote a divine curse of biblical pro-

portions and *sterility* an absolutely irreversible physical condition, infertility connects a medically and socially liminal state in which affected persons hover between reproductive inability and capacity: that is, 'not yet pregnant' (Griel, 1991) but ever hopeful of achieving pregnancy and having a baby to take home. (34-35)

In short, medicalizing infertility meant being able to medically assist heterosexual couples so that they were no longer "social problems". In the twenty-plus years since infertility became medicalized, the diagnosis and treatment of infertility has expanded, yet its medicalized mandate to maintain a "norm" continues to be problematic for queer folks seeking treatment whether they experience a condition of infertility or not.

Infertility and the queer body

When infertility is usually discussed and defined, it is in relation to the heterosexual couple. Alternatively, when spoken of in reference to queer folks, it is done so by referring to a lesbian couple needing access to sperm. The literature and popular culture seem to lack the understanding that queer individuals may experience conditions of infertility. This is problematic as not only do the queer stories of infertility become erased, but it also perpetuates a belief among queer individuals that they are completely fertile. Unfortunately, queer folks are more at risk for and experience some conditions of infertility more often than heterosexuals.

Social determinants affect various populations' risk to particular health conditions. "Demographic characteristics such as racial and ethnic minority group membership and lower education and socioeconomic status" have been linked to various conditions of infertility (Matthews, Brandenburg, Johnson and Hughes, 2004:105). Further, sexual orientation and gender identity have been shown to be social determinants of health in relation to conditions of infertility, particularly gynecological cancers, endometriosis, and Polycystic Ovaries (PCO) and Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) (Agrawal et al., 2004;; Bosinski et al., 1997; Futterweit, Weiss and Fagerstrom, 1986; Jussim, 2000; Matthews et al., 2004; McNair, 2003). Common themes throughout the literature relate to the late diagnoses of these conditions, the misinformation regarding screening queer folks for these conditions, and "negative attitudes and experiences within society and the healthcare system [towards queer individuals], which in turn influence[s] patterns of health-seeking behaviour, health-risk factors and specific health issues" (McNair, 2003: 643; see also Matthews et al., 2004; Quinn, 2003; Rosenberg, 2001). I will briefly review these conditions, and discuss their relation to queer folks who were born with a female reproductive system.

Polycystic Ovaries and Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome are conditions that seem to affect queer individuals the most frequently. Similarly, these conditions are among the highest diagnosed conditions of infertility in Western societies

(Agrawal et al., 2004: 1352), with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome affecting an estimated “20 percent of women” (Kitzinger and Willmott, 2002: 349), and many more women affected solely by Polycystic Ovaries. Polycystic Ovaries (PCOs) are “ovaries with ten or more follicles of between two [and] nine millimetres in diameter” (Agrawal), typically diagnosed via ultrasound. Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is diagnosed when someone has Polycystic Ovaries as well as hyperandrogenism and/or menstrual abnormalities, and is a condition often accompanied by obesity (Agrawal et al., 2004; Kitzinger and Willmott, 2002; Whiteford and Gonzalez, 1995). According to a report and study conducted by [FIRST NAME?] Agrawal et al. (2004) investigating the prevalence of PCO and PCOS among lesbian and heterosexual women visiting a fertility clinic in Britain, the “self-identified lesbian women had a significantly higher prevalence of PCO and PCOS compared with heterosexual women” (1355). More specifically, “polycystic ovaries were observed in 80 percent of lesbian women and in 32 percent of heterosexual women [, and further] analysis ... revealed that 38 percent of lesbian women and 14 percent of heterosexual women had PCOS” (1354). Moreover, other studies which have been conducted with female-to-male (FTM) trans-folks have also shown higher than normal rates of PCOS. In particular, a 1986 study revealed that PCOS “may be present in [between 25 and 33 percent] of [pre-testosterone treated] female [to-male] transsexuals” (Futterweit, Weiss and Fagerstrom, 1986: 70; similarly Bosinski et al., 1997). These high rates of PCOS and PCO translate into high numbers of individuals who may have problems conceiving and/or carrying babies to term. Agrawal and associates explain that besides having issues conceiving, “women with PCOS may miscarry at a rate of approximately 40 percent, compared with a 15 percent rate in the general population” (1356; also Kitzinger and Willmott, 2002: 349). While no particular explanation has been given as to why or how queer folks are more commonly affected with PCO and PCOS, this is not the case with endometriosis.

Endometriosis “affects between 4 and 10 million women in the United States” (Whiteford and Gonzalez, 1995: 32). It

... is a disease of unknown etiology in which misplaced menstrual tissue identical to the endometrium (the lining of the uterus) grows outside of the uterus in the pelvis.... Endometriosis can cause rubbery bands of scar tissue to form between surfaces inside the body, preventing the fallopian tubes from capturing the egg, thus causing infertility. (32)

Endometriosis is often managed through use of hormones, such as oral contraceptives (Hemmings, 2006; Jussim, 2000). As Judith Jussim (2000) explains, queer folks have a “higher rate of untreated endometriosis [which] may contribute to infertility problems” due to the fact that, “many straight women receive ‘accidental’ treatment for mild endometriosis by spending years on oral

contraceptives.” While PCO, PCOS, and endometriosis are directly linked to infertility, the link between the diagnoses and experiences of gynecological cancers and infertility must not be neglected.

While not a condition of infertility, per se, cancers and treatment of cancers can certainly affect a person’s fertility, especially if the cancer is diagnosed in a later stage and/or affects the cervix, ovaries, or uterus/endometrium. Given the fact that 1) queer folks are more likely than heterosexuals and gender-normative folks to have infrequent or delayed visits to physicians, and 2) more misunderstandings or ignorance exists about conditions and screenings relating to queer health, particular concerns arise regarding cancers and queer folks (McNair, 2003; Matthews et al., 2004; Quinn, 2003; Rosenberg, 2001). “Cancer of the cervix is the third most common cancer world-wide” (Quinn, 2003), and Matthews et al. (2004) identify factors that are closely linked to its predominance as:

failure to receive regular Pap tests, exposure to certain strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV), infection with other sexually transmitted diseases, older age, cigarette smoking, immunosuppressive disorders such as HIV/AIDS, and sexual risk behaviors.” (106; similarly stated by Quinn, 2003)

Further, Michael Quinn (2003) notes a positive relationship between obesity and uterine/endometrial cancer, and a negative correlation between ovarian cancer and pregnancy/birthing, breastfeeding, and consumptions of oral contraceptives (also noted by Rosenberg, 2001).

Unfortunately, most of these links place queer folks at higher risk, because as a population they have been shown to be more obese, have an increased incidence of smoking tobacco, engaging in sexual activity earlier and with less protection (in terms of STIs), have delayed or no childbearing and breastfeeding, and less consumption of oral contraceptives (Jussim, 2000; Matthews et al., 2004; Rosenberg, 2001). Moreover, in regards to cervical cancer screening tests, “findings from several studies suggest lower rates of cervical cancer screening among lesbian women ... [which] has been associated with lower perceived cancer risk [by physicians and lesbians, alike]” (Matthews et al., 2004: 106; also Marrazzo and Stine, 2004; Quinn, 2003; Rosenberg, 2001). In fact,

routine Papanicolaou test screening is performed less frequently among lesbians than national guidelines advise, although sexual transmission of oncogenic genital human papillomavirus (HPV) has been reported to occur between women, and genital HPV may be detected in up to 40 percent of lesbians. (Marrazzo and Stine, 2004: 1298-1299)

Clearly, more education of physicians and queer folks regarding risk factors and screenings for cancers, endometriosis, and PCO/PCOS would be

beneficial to queer folks' fertility and overall health. Moreover, physicians and the general public also need to understand that queer individuals and couples bring unique situations and perspectives to the table, in regards to diagnoses and experiences with infertility.

In "Opting in to Motherhood: Lesbians Blurring the Boundaries and Meaning of Parenthood and Kinship," Dunne (2000) brings up

... [a] fairly unique advantage for women who want to become mothers in a lesbian relationship—if one partner has fertility problems, the other may agree to go through the pregnancy instead. [Dunne cites four] examples ... of partners swapping for this reason, and several others [who] expressed their willingness to do so. (26)

While her point is valid and noteworthy, it is also problematic in that it oversimplifies the context and solution of fertility problems among lesbian couples. To suggest quite simply that if one partner has fertility problems than the other partner can conceive, sweeps over a very emotional issue, and neglects to give due care and attention to the fact that the couple is still dealing with the infertility of one of the partners.

Our society places a lot of emphasis on gender roles and fulfillment in parenting, thus, receiving a diagnosis of infertility is not easy. Guilt and shame are commonly cited feelings associated with infertility (Whiteford and Gonzalez, 1999; Inhorn, 1994). Arthur Griel (2002) notes:

It is clear that infertility brings with it a certain sense of demoralization for ... infertile women.... The experience of infertility is an experience of the failure of the body and self, and the experience of infertility treatment is an experience of frustration, loss of control, and mortification. (113)

I cannot imagine how the experience would be any less tragic for a lesbian, even if her partner could conceive. As one of the couples I interviewed in my research about birthing explained, having a physician and/or fertility specialist suggest that the 'more fertile' partner try to conceive, when the 'less fertile' one wants to, is inappropriate. Not only can the 'infertile' partner be offended because she wants to carry a child, but the 'more fertile' partner can be offended because she had no desire to be pregnant. For people who do not embrace a stereotypical 'feminine' identity, such as butches, genderqueers, or some trans-identified individuals, receiving a diagnosis of infertility may either support their incongruent gender identity, or cause further stress by seemingly stripping them of their agency to hold on to any level of 'female' identity. Either way, receiving a diagnosis of infertility does not seem any easier when one has a partner who *could*, hypothetically, conceive and/or maintain a pregnancy.

Kim Toevs and Stephanie Brill (2002) discuss another potential nega-

tive side-effect of having the second partner conceive and birth a child after the first partner has had problems with infertility. They explain that, “if one partner in a couple was unable to conceive or hold a pregnancy and now the second partner is ready to give birth, this can retrigger the non-pregnant mom’s feelings of inadequacy, resentment, or envy that she isn’t the one who’s about to have the baby” (431). Their point further illustrates another aspect that is often neglected in discussions of infertility—that the feelings of inadequacy or guilt of inability to successfully conceive, and/or maintain a pregnancy, do not end when the couple successfully conceives or takes another route to bring children into their lives. These are not temporary feelings but are instead long lasting, and often re-emerge.

The non-conclusion

Given the relationship between infertility and queer folks, it is disappointing that no one has investigated the narratives or experiences of those most affected. This dearth, however, reflects a larger neglect that existed until recent years in social sciences, of both women’s voices and stories, and what Inhorn (1994) calls “reproductive morbidity.” She notes:

Within the past two decades, medical anthropology has contributed significantly to the exploration of human reproduction ... [yet] *reproductive morbidity*—including infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and pregnancy loss through miscarriage and stillbirth—has generated mostly silence in the medical anthropology community. (459)

Frank van Balen and Marcia Inhorn (2002) further point out and ask:

Given the utility of infertility as a lens through which so many other compelling issues may be brought into focus, the question becomes, Why the relative neglect of infertility as a legitimate subject of social science inquiry? (5)

Their point is strengthened through the minimal work that has focused on narratives of infertility.

Whiteford and Gonzalez (1995) are among the few social scientists who have researched narratives of infertility. They note that researching the narratives and experiences, and not simply the frequency of diagnoses, of infertility is important because:

the pain, stigma and spoiled identities of women like [the participants of their study on heterosexual women’s experiences of infertility] Laura, Cathy, Sarah and Megan reflect the hidden burden of infertility. Their narratives, their ‘truths’, their stories reveal the gulf that separates the medical industrialized ‘reality’ of infertility, from its lived experience...

[Moreover,] the story that biomedicine tells about women's experiences of infertility can be countered by the stories women tell about their own infertility. Their stories provide us with substantiation of alternative visions of reality; visions unlike the dominant medical story produced and propagated by those in biomedicine. (35)

Countering the “erasure” that has occurred with these previously untold narratives, and making them part of the “official story”, not only “provide[s] us with substantiation of alternative visions of reality” but it also offers unique insights to broader issues.

Due to race, ethnicity, class, culture, sexuality, and gender, a variety of realities exist. Moreover, people's experiences are further influenced by their diverse bodies, their access to resources, and negotiated relations within their cultural situations. Acknowledging the plethora of experiences and narratives, and ensuring none are erased is a daunting task. Its benefits with respect to the new perspectives and insights that can be gained are, however, immeasurable. With respect to queer infertility, the complex social ideas regarding sexual orientation and who should and should not become mothers, and the presence of two-women in a queer relationship striving to become mothers *together*, challenge the *status quo*. Studying queer folks' experiences of infertility, therefore, not only benefits queer folks who have or will experience infertility, but it also provides unique perspectives on gender and social expectations regarding sexuality, reproduction, kinship, and of course mothering. These unique perspectives allow us to challenge our deeply seated cultural and personal views, and to re-examine the stereotypes and assumptions that underlie them. This in turn, hopefully brings more understanding and acceptance of the diverse experiences and choices people make and live in our society. And ultimately, is that not what we all strive for?

¹These interviews were conducted as part of my Master's research and thesis on “Queer Couples' Narratives of Birthing.” For more on that research, please see the completed thesis (Walks, 2007).

²While the possibility for two women to be named on birth certificates exists in these provinces, the situations in which this can legally occur differs from province to province, depending on whether the women are married (to each other) and/or the anonymity of their donor.

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Are Some Mothers More Equal than Others?

Class Divisions in U.S. Family Leave Policy

This paper presents an historical-political explanation for the limited extent to which the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), in terms of its formal provisions, promotes gender and class equality. The FMLA certainly is notable for creating a gender-neutral entitlement for Americans to return to their jobs after taking twelve weeks of unpaid leave. However, the absence of income replacement creates a bias favouring those with greater financial means. I argue that gender neutrality and lack of income replacement are interrelated and conflicting components of the policy that evolved out of long-existing and durable differences among women's movement advocates. In the legislative struggles leading up to enactment of the policy, "equality" feminists did not compromise on the principle of gender-equality but did compromise on the issue of pay. This contrasts with the position of "difference" feminists, who were willing to compromise on gender-neutrality and thus to seek maternity leave. Difference feminists also thought that income replacement, again in contrast to equality feminists, was crucial for working class women's ability to take advantage of a leave policy and thus were less willing to compromise on the issue of pay. These divisions have a long history, yet are also part of a relatively recent partisan realignment on the issue of equal rights for women—with both developments suggesting that resolution of the class issue at the core of federal family leave policy remains intractable. The historical home of the equality feminists is the more elite-oriented Republican Party, with the switch to becoming one of the core constituents of the Democratic Party finalized only by the time of the 1980 presidential election. In contrast, difference feminists emerged out of the Democratic Party/New Deal-aligned movement to enact protections for women working in the paid labour force, a movement begun in the early twentieth century. When the Democratic Party undertook a concerted effort beginning in the 1960s to bring women into the fold as a new base, groups with very different perspectives on women's rights thus came

together in an at-best uneasy relationship. Because of the relatively recent occurrence of the partisan realignment, I argue that class remains an unresolved conflict, thus limiting the overall fairness of the FMLA.

Introduction and summary

Many have praised the *Family and Medical Leave Act* of 1993 (FMLA) for moving the United States toward greater gender equality in its work-family policy. However, the law only provides for unpaid leave, thus privileging middle- and upper-class working parents. This indicates serious limits on the overall equity and fairness in the supports available to working parents for attaining the difficult balance between work and family. Such class inequality has been viewed generally as an unfortunate consequence of the need for family-leave policy advocates to compromise with opponents. I argue that class inequality is a fundamental component of the policy, thus not fully explicable on the basis of strategic considerations alone. This component stems from political and historical dynamics involving women's movement advocates themselves. As such, I also argue, class inequality may be a more intractable problem for family-leave policy at the federal level than previously thought. After presenting and empirically assessing a political-historical explanation for U.S. family-leave policy along the foregoing lines, I close with a discussion of current state-level efforts to enact paid family leave—which appear to hold out the most promise for covering women and men from across the class spectrum.

The FMLA is notable for creating an entitlement for Americans to return to their jobs after taking twelve weeks of unpaid leave from work to attend to a variety of family concerns. According to the FMLA, workers in organizations with 50 or more workers are entitled to take twelve weeks of unpaid leave to care for a child, a spouse, an ailing parent or themselves (Wisensale, 2001: 150-151). The policy is also notable for being gender-neutral: women and men are eligible to take leave. In theory, then, women and men should fulfill both breadwinning and caring/nurturing roles, which is intended to enhance equality for women. In practice, however, numerous labour force statistics indicate a persistent intersection between gender and class inequities. The unpaid designation thus appears to be problematic from the standpoint of overall equity and fairness. Unsurprisingly, women with newborn babies have taken the largest percentage of all periods of leave lasting 28 days or longer (Commission on Leave, 1996). Yet working mothers are significantly less likely than working fathers to have access to employer-provided paid sick leave, paid vacation, and other benefits that are typically used to make up for lost income during unpaid family and medical leaves (Heymann, 2000: 114, 152; Milkman and Appelbaum, 2004: 3). Additionally, women generally earn less than men. While the wage gap is narrowing, in 2001 overall women's median weekly earnings were still 78 percent of those of men (Conway, Ahern, and Steuernagel, 2005: 94; Ford, 2006). To the extent that the clustering of women into a relatively small number of low-pay, low-status occupations helps to ac-

count for the pay gap (Conway, Ahern, and Steuernagel, 2005; Ford, 2006), the unpaid leave designation hits lower-income women particularly hard. Women also constitute the large majority of working single parents (Wisensale, 2001), whose financial situation typically does not allow for a significant period of leave time without income.

This paper presents an historical-political explanation for the limited extent to which the FMLA, in terms of its formal provisions, promotes genuine equality. The explanation presented views gender neutrality and lack of income replacement as interrelated and conflicting components of the policy, which evolved out of long-existing and durable differences among women's movement advocates. While it generally over-simplifies matters to divide the women's movement into just two camps, two categories of organization indeed had the most influence in the battle for passage of family leave legislation (Bernstein, 2001; Elison, 1997; Kaitin, 1994; Marks, 1997; Wisensale, 2001; Woloch, 1996). "Equality" feminists did not compromise on the principle of gender-equality but did compromise on the issue of pay. This contrasts with the position of "difference" feminists, who were willing to compromise on gender-neutrality and thus to seek maternity leave—a gender-specific type of policy which explicitly recognizes women's unique burden of bearing and caring for children. Difference feminists also thought that income replacement, again in contrast to equality feminists, was crucial for working class women's ability to take advantage of a leave policy and thus were less willing to compromise on the issue of pay (Bernstein, 2001; Elison, 1997; Kaitin, 1994; Marks, 1997; Wisensale, 2001; Woloch, 1996). These divisions in the women's movement coalition to win passage of family leave legislation have a long history, yet are also part of a relatively recent partisan realignment on the issue of equal rights for women—with both developments suggesting that resolution of the class issue at the core of federal family leave policy should be particularly intractable. The historical home of the equality feminists was the more elite-oriented Republican Party, with the switch to becoming one of the core constituents of the Democratic Party finalized only by the time of the 1980 presidential election. In contrast, the difference feminists emerged out of the Democratic Party/New Deal-aligned movement to enact protections for women working in the paid labour force, a movement begun in the early twentieth century (Costain, 1992; Wolbrecht, 2000). When the Democratic Party undertook a concerted effort beginning in the 1960s to bring women into the fold as a new base, groups with very different perspectives on women's rights thus came together in an at-best uneasy relationship. Because of the relatively recent occurrence of the partisan realignment, I argue the conflict persists with albeit diminished strength.

As such, this analysis represents a departure from many analyses of the FMLA, which depict the gender neutrality provision as a victory in the fight for gender equality, and the unpaid designation as the cost of achieving compromise with legislative opponents—a process separate and unrelated

to that accounting for the successful inclusion of the gender-neutrality provision. These accounts generally highlight inter- rather than intra-party dynamics, emphasizing the fact that Republicans were firmly opposed to paid leave and that Democrats were quite willing to give up pay replacement in order to win passage of some type of family leave legislation (Elison, 1997; Marks, 1997). These accounts also underestimate the extent to which the gender-neutral component was a matter of significant debate among women's movement family leave policy advocates. Partly because of the focus on inter-party dynamics, these accounts also over-emphasize the confidence that many equality-feminist family leave policy advocates express in the success of potential future efforts to expand the policy to include pay replacement. For example, should the Democratic Party win the presidency, according to this view, perhaps leave would be expanded to include pay replacement. Given the still unresolved issues within the Democratically-aligned women's movement, the analysis presented in this paper suggests this confidence at the present time is unwarranted.

Equality vs. difference:

Feminists in policy developments and debates leading up to passage of the *Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993*

Conflict between equality and difference feminists over the shape of a proposed family leave policy, specifically over whether the goals should include gender-neutrality and pay replacement, ensued in the wake of passage by Congress of the 1978 *Pregnancy Discrimination Act* (PDA). This legislation essentially stated that employers of 15 or more persons may not treat pregnancy more or less favourably than any other temporary, non-occupational disability (Wisensale, 2001). Pregnant employees of establishments offering temporary disability were to have access to this benefit on the same terms as any other employee (Wisensale, 2001: 88). California went further than the law required, enacting a maternity leave law requiring employers to grant pregnant workers up to four months of unpaid leave with job security (Bernstein, 2001; Wisensale, 2001). In 1982, Lilian Garland sued under the California law the bank where she worked for her right to resume her old job. The employer, however, claimed the California law was invalidated by the PDA as it provided special treatment for pregnant women. Personifying the difference vs. equality debate (Bernstein, 2001; Wisensale, 2001), while feminists agreed that Garland should be reinstated, they were divided on how the law should be interpreted to bring about this result. The National Organization for Women, additional equality feminist groups, and the American Civil Liberties Union argued that the bank would obey both laws by providing disability leave for all workers, thus avoiding the provision of special treatment for pregnant women. Difference feminists, however, argued that since pregnancy was a real sexual difference, some degree of special treatment was needed to achieve equal results (Bernstein, 2001; Vogel, 1990; Wisensale, 2001). In *California Federal Savings and Loan*

Association v. Guerra (1987), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld California's law, resulting in what ultimately turned out to be a temporary victory for difference feminists.

In 1991, the Supreme Court dealt a blow to the difference argument yet also set the stage for continuing debate between the groups representing the two primary strands of the women's movement over what type of family leave policy to fight for. In the *UAW v. Johnson Controls* (1991) case, women employees at a battery manufacturer and their union, the UAW, challenged the company's 1982 policy barring women from jobs involving actual or potential exposure to lead—which risks the health of fetuses. The workers charged that classifying all women as “capable of bearing children” as a criterion for exclusion was a form of sex discrimination, which therefore violated the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (Daniels, 1993; Woloch, 1996). The Supreme Court agreed. In the majority opinion, Justice Harry A. Blackmun stated:

Concern for a woman's existing or potential offspring historically has been the excuse for denying women equal employment opportunities.... It is no more appropriate for the courts than it is for individual employers to decide whether a woman's reproductive role is more important to herself and her family than her economic role. Congress has left this choice to the women as hers to make. (*UAW v. Johnson Controls* 1991)

This decision thus invalidated using the difference argument as a legal basis for excluding women from work (Woloch, 1996), but the justification for affording special treatment to women in the form of paid maternity leave proposals survived in the women's movement politics surrounding debate over what ultimately became the *Family and Medical Leave Act*. One part of the largely Democratic family-leave coalition included child and family researchers and difference feminists who initially focused their energies on achieving paid leave and in the case of some organizations, maternity leave—a type of leave restricted to women (Bernstein, 2001; Elison, 1997; Kaitin, 1994; Marks, 1997; Wisensale, 1997, 2001). On the other side were equality feminists who emphasized the goal of equal access to employment for women (Kaitin, 1994). This understanding was associated with the goals of gender-neutral and unpaid leave.

Unsurprisingly, this divided Democratic coalition confronted Republican employer interest groups united into a well-funded, well-organized opposition with impressive mobilizational abilities, very good access to members of Congress (Bernstein, 2001; Elison, 1997; Kaitin, 1994; Wisensale, 2001) and a high degree of consensus on the undesirability of mandating employment leave (Marks, 1997)—in particular leave that covered both male and female employees and that included income replacement. Family-leave advocates eventually reached a compromise among themselves, agreeing to pursue unpaid

leave. Equality feminists, however, would not compromise on the issue of the gender-neutral designation of a family leave proposal (Bernstein, 2001), an issue that met less objection from Republican opponents than the inclusion of income replacement. These developments have been widely credited with facilitating passage of the *Family and Medical Leave Act*, which overcame two vetoes in the late 1980s and early 1990s before getting President Clinton's signature in January 1993 (Bernstein, 2001; Elison, 1997; Kaitin, 1994; Marks, 1997; Wisensale, 1997, 2001).

Protectionists in the Democratic Party and emergent equality feminists in the Republican Party from the 1910s through the 1960s: Looking ahead

While clearly facilitating passage of family leave legislation and thus indicative of a certain degree of progress, the compromise, which specifies gender-neutral, unpaid leave also exposes significant and problematic unresolved differences between the difference and equality feminist constituents of the Democratic Party. The promise of genuine gender equity, entailing greater equality between men and women in both work and family domains, awaits resolution of the class conflict at the heart of federal family leave policy discussed at the outset of this paper. While this development is dependent upon inter-party cooperation, it is also dependent on the women's movement and the Democratic Party resolving their internal conflicts. Because this conflict is rooted in historical social movement, public policy and partisan developments, however, it is quite durable and resistant to change.

The forebears of difference feminists are protectionists (Woloch, 1996), who beginning at the turn of the twentieth century fought for state-level protections for women workers, including limitations on working hours, restrictions on night work and allowable weights of items lifted by women, minimum wage laws, and many others (Bernstein, 2001; Kamerman, Kahn and Kingston, 1983; Mettler, 1998; Piccirillo, 1988; Rothman, 1978; Williams, 1984; Wisensale, 2001; Woloch, 1996). In essence, these efforts represented an attempt to maintain the ideal of women's distinctiveness as mothers and homemakers in the face of the increasingly unaccommodating reality of rising numbers of women in the paid labour force. Protectionist organizations would have preferred a world where women could remain at home raising children and tending to the home. However, the reality was that more and more women needed to work. Reformers thus had to compromise on their goals: protectionist policies, while they would not bring women back into the home, theoretically would at least help women when they had no choice but to enter the workforce (Wisensale, 2001; Woloch, 1996, 8-9).

While the notable legislative successes of the protectionist movement were often challenged in court, the United States Supreme Court decision *Muller v. Oregon* (1908) constituted a victory for the movement and launched protectionism as a prime influence on federal policies regarding the growing

numbers of working women. Beginning in the 1930s, protectionists joined the labour movement as partners in the New Deal Democratic Party coalition thus helping to shape landmark social welfare legislation through the 1960s. Turning to equality feminism, the roots of this movement as a political and public policy force are in the Republican Party. While the Republican Party had limited policy influence from the 1930s through the 1960s, equality feminists worked to keep the principle of women's equality alive. In contrast to protectionists, equality feminists—themselves largely from the upper segments of society and working on behalf of other elite women—argued that the legal system should treat women as free agents in the labour market, just as men were. This position was an anathema to protectionists, who argued in contrast that the mostly working-class women they sought to help had nothing to gain and much to lose from such “freedom.” (Woloch, 1996) Generally speaking, protectionists had the bigger influence on policy regarding women and work—an influence that persisted even into the 1970s when equality feminists gained the upper hand and the partisan switch on women's rights came to fruition. In light of the long history of protectionism as a public policy approach, it is the relatively recent occurrence of the Democratic Party's embrace of both difference and equality women's organizations and the recent rise to prominence of equality feminism within the Party that have made it difficult for the women's movement to lay out a path to genuine gender equality including higher as well as lower income women.

The 1910s-1930s

The story of the rise of protectionism begins at the state and local levels. Reformist groups including the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Women's Trade Union League, and particularly the National Consumer's League sought and generally won restrictions on the number of hours women could work, exclusions of women from night shifts, prohibitions against women performing hazardous or immoral work, and against women working for a period before and after giving birth (Bernstein, 2001; Kameran, Kahn and Kingston, 1983; Mettler, 1998; Piccirillo, 1988; Rothman, 1978; Williams, 1984; Wisensale, 2001; Woloch, 1996). While these laws were often challenged, in *Muller v. State of Oregon (1908)* the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously against Muller, an employer who challenged Oregon's ten-hour law for women as a violation of Freedom of Contract. Oregon's law limiting the number of hours female employees could work to ten, the Court reasoned, was a reasonable exception to Freedom of Contract as the law affected only women who as mothers or potential mothers needed protection when they had to work outside the home (Bernstein, 2001; Wisensale, 2001; Woloch, 1996, 37).

In the wake of this landmark decision, the protectionist movement, the incipient organized labour movement and other reformers came to the Federal Government on the larger wave of Progressivism and thus began the influ-

ence of protectionism on policy relating to women and work. Beginning in the 1930s, the New Deal saw the emergence of strong protectionist support in the Women's Bureau and other divisions of the Department of Labour, in First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's circle, and most prominently in the Democratic Party as it structured the politics of the federal government (Woloch, 1996: 61-62). This is evident in many of the hallmark public policies of the New Deal, in particular the *Social Security Act* of 1935 (SSA). The operating protectionist assumption—discussed above—that while many women unfortunately had to work, the ideal of the woman at home should be maintained suffices the SSA's center-piece retirement program. According to Steven Wisensale (2001):

...the *Social Security Act* was structured under the family wage system. That is, the “breadwinner-homemaker” family, in which the husband worked and earned enough money to support his wife who stayed home to raise the kids, was not only recognized, it was rewarded. Those who “earned” their pensions—at that time and until well into the 1960s that almost always meant men—benefited at retirement. (33-34)

The SSA also included Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), descendent of the state-level Progressive-era mothers' pensions and partly the result of protectionist efforts. ADC was similarly expressive of protectionist assumptions. Under this program, women whose husbands had died or were absent for other reasons were encouraged, by way of government subsidy, to stay at home to raise their children (Wisensale, 2001, 34). Insofar as this particular solution defined women in relation to men, who were expected under normal circumstances to be their providers and supporters, ADC was under-girded by protectionist ideals (Coontz, 1988, 1997; Gordon, 1994; Jacobs and Davies, 1994; Mink, 1995). One subjective indicator of the protectionist mark on this and other New Deal policies is that Labour Secretary Frances Perkins, a noted protectionist, claimed credit for these achievements (Perkins, 1946).

Backing up in time somewhat, modern equality feminism began to emerge in the form of organizations with a contrasting perspective on how to further the interests of working women. These organizations focused on establishing working women's status as completely equal to working men's (Woloch, 1996), which involved battling many protectionist laws. During World War I, women worked as conductors, ticket agents and ticket collectors on New York's street railways. After the war, over half of these women workers lost their jobs after the railway employees union promoted a law limiting women's hours and banning them from work after 10:00 p.m. (Greenwald, 1980; Woloch, 1996). Women printers in New York also had their opportunities curtailed by a night work ban (Kessler-Harris, 1982). The remaining railway workers as well as the printers eventually won exemptions from protection, but the

organizations they founded—the Women’s League for Equal Opportunity and the Equal Rights Association—formed the core of an incipient workers’ equal rights campaign (Greenwald, 1980; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Woloch, 1996). While emerging from working-class roots, these organizations and those that followed soon came to be seen as having a distinct bias toward the interests of elite women. In the wake of ratification of the Suffrage (the nineteenth) Amendment in 1920, Alice Paul began to use the National Woman’s Party (NWP) to push for an Equal Rights Amendment. The ERA would have barred sex discrimination in federal law—a goal which likely led prominent protectionist and working-class women’s champion Florence Kelley to leave the NWP in 1921 (Lunardini, 1986; Woloch, 1996). The ERA was subsequently introduced in Congress for the first time in 1923 and nascent equality feminists exercised what little influence they had from within the Republican Party, the party of elite interests. While potentially challenging to protectionism, these developments posed little competition as protectionists had substantial institutional resources throughout the federal government from which to influence public policy.

The 1940s-50s

In the 1940s, given the need for women’s labour during World War II, there was a temporary suspension of the protectionist approach. By many accounts, this era was pivotal for showing that women could “do what men do,” thus contributing subsequently to the belated rise of equality feminism. In 1943, Congress passed the Lanham Act providing federal grants to the states to establish child care facilities to help women workers taking the place of men during the war (Conway, Ahern and Steuernagel, 2005; Michel, 1999). While this legislation is certainly notable for marking the first time the Federal Government had ever explicitly employed the idea of work-family accommodation in its public policy, it is arguably just as notable for being the only such instance. The law was not renewed when the war ended (Conway, Ahern and Steuernagel, 2005; Michel, 1999). There was also a well-documented effort through the 1940s and 1950s to get former soldiers back into the workforce and women back into the home. As in the case of some New Deal programs, the GI Bill did not explicitly discriminate against women workers. However, in the process of providing a variety of social supports specifically to veterans, the policy had the effect of defining roles for men and women that were very much in line with protectionist assumptions (Wisensale, 2001). Generally speaking, the return of protectionism is evidenced by numerous post-war policies based on the claim that women should “give back” their jobs to “working men” who needed to earn a family wage (Bernstein, 2001; Wisensale, 2001). Moving beyond a consideration of public policy *per se*, however, the women who had worked during World War II as well as the multitudes who witnessed this event were clearly to some extent moved to challenge long-held assumptions about men’s and women’s proper places in society.

The 1960s

The major policy developments of the 1960's reveal the beginning of a slow transition away from protectionism and toward women's equal rights as the primary approach taken by the federal government toward women and work. This process was rooted in changes going on in the Democratic Party whereby the leadership sought to preemptively deal with the incipient decline of organized labour by cultivating women as a new base. This included efforts to help spur the modern women's movement (Costain, 1992; Wolbrecht, 2000), a movement which housed both difference-feminist descendants of protectionists as well as newly influential equality feminists. The Kennedy Commission on the Status of Women was convened in the early 1960's to advise the President on policies that concerned women, particularly working women. The noted protectionists who led the Commission, Eleanor Roosevelt and Women's-Bureau head Esther Peterson, had hoped that by making some concessions to protagonists of equal rights, they could "do away" with the rationale for an Equal Rights Amendment (Harrison, 1988; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Woloch, 1996). The Committee on Civil Rights, where the primary business of the Commission took place, sought to achieve equality for women workers while keeping protective laws in place. The Committee called for challenges to sexually discriminatory laws—but not protective laws—under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments (Woloch, 1996). The extent to which these protectionist goals were included as recommendations in the final report of the Kennedy Commission can be taken as an indication of the continuing, but gradually diminishing influence of protectionists. The recommendation was included that where maximum-hours were the best possible protection, these laws should be maintained, strengthened and expanded. Also included were the more equal rights-oriented recommendations of equal pay for comparable work, tax deductions for child care, and paid maternity leaves (Harrison, 1988: 127, 151-54; Woloch, 1996: 65).

The *Equal Pay Act* of 1963 was similarly indicative of both the rise of equal rights and the continuing influence of protectionism. This legislation requiring that persons performing the same work receive the same pay signaled the first time the Federal Government had ever outlawed sex discrimination in employment (Woloch, 1996: 65). However, there were numerous limitations and restrictions in the law, revealing the dual Women's Bureau's—still a protectionist outpost—goals of advancing equal rights for women in the workplace while keeping labour protections in place (Harrison 1988). As such, the hand of organized labour, long allied with protectionism, is also visible in the EPA (Costain, 2003). Even passage of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 and establishment of its enforcement agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, did not mean an end to protectionism until the end of the decade. Title VII prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of race, colour, religion, national origin, and, thanks to Democratic Representative Howard W. Smith of Virginia, on the basis of sex (Brauer, 1983; Gold, 1981). While

on its face, the new law would have appeared to invalidate protective laws for women workers, the results were quite mixed. In 1966, the EEOC stated that so-called “beneficial” laws—the minimum wage, over-time pay, and rest periods—had to apply to both men and women. Remaining single-sex protective laws—maximum-hours laws, night work bans, weight-lifting restrictions, and exclusionary laws—would be left to litigation in the states (Babcock, Freedman, Norton and Ross, 1975).

Discussion and conclusion

On the whole, connecting up with the earlier section on the debates between difference and equality feminists over family leave, the foregoing suggests that as women’s place in the Democratic Party grew, long-existing divisions in the women’s movement persisted. The fact that federal family leave policy as instituted by the FMLA is gender-neutral and unpaid, while clearly indicative of the necessary role of inter-party compromise in achieving legislation, also testifies to continuing unresolved class conflict between more working-class oriented difference feminists and more elite oriented equality feminists. The fact that this conflict has a long history and is internal to the now Democratic-Party aligned women’s movement in turn suggests that the promise of genuine gender equity—entailing greater equality not only between men and women, but also among women—requires for realization a more difficult and drawn-out process than many accounts of family leave policy focusing on inter-party conflict and compromise allow for. The failure of virtually all efforts to expand on the FMLA, including most notably efforts to include pay replacement, attests to this difficulty (Ness, 2007a). In June of 2007, Senators Dodd and Stevens introduced paid leave legislation in the form of The Family Leave Insurance Act of 2007 (Ness, 2007b). However, the larger political context does not bode well, as other proposed expansions have not succeeded. Congress failed to override President Bush’s veto early in October 2007 of legislation renewing the Children’s Health Insurance Program, which included a measure to extend the FMLA for up to 6 months for families of wounded military personnel (Ness, 2007a).

As often happens in American politics, the states now appear to offer more fertile ground for paid leave policies. Numerous states now have family leave with limited income replacement, suggesting there may be greater capacity for ordinary working women and men across the class spectrum to make a difference in political arenas that are closer to home. Such efforts, starting at the grass-roots level with women’s and labour organizations, need to intensify to expand the number of working women and men eligible for pay replacement. Should the achievement of paid leave in the states reach threshold levels, paid leave at the federal level would become a reality thus establishing it as a right rather than a matter of good fortune for those living in states with the policy in place. Policies furthering genuine gender and class equality are clearly difficult to attain, but not impossible given the concerted and sustained efforts of

working women, men and the organizations representing their interests.

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Lingqin Feng

Policy Shifts and their Effects on Childcare in a Rural Chinese Context

Based on the field research in a central Chinese village, this article examines the effects of policy shifts on childcare in different social, political and economic contexts in rural China. The collective production (1950–1978) sets strict constraints on rural people for compulsory participation in agricultural activities. The economic reforms (post-1978) have brought about dramatic changes in rural areas, but women still shoulder triple burden of farm work, housework, and care work when men migrate out for paid work. The article argues that women act actively in face with the changing society, and that declines in birthrates in rural China are due to economic reforms and family planning policy (1979).

Brief introduction to Chinese rural society

Over the past 50 years, dramatic changes have taken place since the revolution of 1949 changed China into a socialist state. In rural areas, the first land reform of the early 1950s collectivized privately-owned land systems. The state advocated for women's participation in collective production with such political slogans as "Times are different, men and women are equal." "What men can do, women can do too." This period witnessed women exhorted to "hold up half the sky" in terms of agricultural activities. The economic reforms (post-1978) have, however, changed the collective production system to the household responsibility system. Household once again becomes a basic unit of production. This gives rural people relative autonomy to arrange agricultural activities, which, in turn, results in men migrating to urban centres for paid work in cities and women doing farm work, housework, and care work. This is known as the "feminization of agriculture" in rural China (Croll, 1983; Wolf, 1985).

Substantial research has been done on women in China, including the

works by Li Xiaojiang (1994, 1999), Elizabeth J. Croll (1978, 1983), Margery Wolf (1985), and Ellen R. Judd (1994, 2002). However, little or no research examines the impacts of the interrelatedness of state policies and social norms on childcare in rural China. Based on the data collected in a central-China village, this article examines the effects of policy shifts on childcare during the periods of the collective production (1950-1978) and the household responsibility production (post-1978) to explore how rural women balanced farm work, housework, and care work in different social, political, and economic contexts. This article argues that women quickly adapted to the triple burden of work, and made adjustments necessary for the changing society, thus actively contributing to the continuation, transformation, and reproduction of rural family life and to changes in rural ideology on family life.

Study on childcare in a central Chinese village

The study on childcare in rural China is part of my research on the effects of policy shifts and marital relations in a rural Chinese context. Qualitative methods were used to study how individuals experienced and interacted with their social world, and the meaning it had for them (Merriam, 2002). A stratified sample was used to choose couples as participants in order to hear women's voices as well as men's. This sampling helped to avoid adopting the viewpoint of one only gender, but presented the situation as if it encompassed all of social reality (Eichler, 1986). With the variety of the ages of participants ranging from 24 to 92, I expected to have a longterm view on the changes in people's attitudes to particular events; thus, comparison and contrast would be made accordingly. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed for the village research, which gave participants relatively more space to express themselves in depth. It also was also designed to probe villagers' everyday lives through their lived experience and stories, which, in turn, would reflect changes in childcare in a village context.

Childcare and the collective production (1950-1978)

Freidrich Engels (1975) claims that, "The emancipation of woman will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time" (221). Socialist China took Engels's approach to encourage women to participate in social activities. Women's labour became indispensable in agricultural activities. They were regarded as "holding-up half the sky" in the collective production. At the national level, women's production participation increased from 20 to 40 percent in the early 1950s to 70 percent of adult women in 1957 (Gao, 1994: 81).

At the village level, every collective production team had its rules and regulations for its members to observe. Based on the team rules and regulations, men and single women had 28 working days a month. They worked three times a day: the early morning, morning, and afternoon.¹ Married women

had 24 working days a month, and twice a day without doing farm work in the early morning. During those times, they were supposed to take care of their young children and cook breakfast. But, care work and housework were not paid work; women did not gain work points for childcare and housework. Work value was assessed in work points, with ten work points a day for men and eight work points a day for women. Production teams allocated grain to every household partly based on work points and partly on the number of family members. Consequently, more work points meant more grain for rural families. Collective production activities were uniformly arranged. There was also a fine for those who could not fulfill the working-day requirement. With one day less, one would have a day's work points subtracted from those he or she earned. One had to ask for leave if he/she was ill or wanted to visit relatives or friends. The inflexibility of work hours and work arrangements made it difficult for young mothers to balance childcare and collective farm work, particularly those who did not have help from parents-in-law or other relatives. Due to the strict rules and regulations of the collective team, villagers felt tied to the agricultural production. They never had holidays or free weekends. Their only holidays or days off were rainy and snowy days when outdoor work was not possible.

With childcare as women's work, and participation in collective production was an obligation for every team member, what were young mothers' lives like if they needed to tend infants or toddlers and do farm work at the same time? Ming, a 71-year-old woman, remembers how her family of seven members (she and her husband and their five children), lived in a straw house consisting of three rooms. Her family also shared the house with her mother-in-law and young brother-in-law, who was a teenager then. Her family lived in one of the three rooms, her mother-in-law and brother-in-law in another. The sitting room was shared between them. They also shared a kitchen, a small straw hut in the yard. Ming was not on good terms with her mother-in-law, so the latter refused to offer help with childcare. Talking about childcare during the collective production period, Ming reiterated that young children are lucky now; they would not be locked in the house. Their mothers did not have to earn work points.

My two daughters were [born] one year apart. When the second daughter was born, the first daughter was still breastfed. I did not stop [breastfeeding] her because we did not have nutritious food for a one-year-old child. So, the two were breastfed together. My mother-in-law would not help take care of either of them. She went to live with her daughter who worked in the city....

When I went to work in the field, I had to lock the infant in the house and bring the elder one with me on fine days. During the work break, I would run back home to feed the younger one. Sometimes, she would cry herself hoarse; sometimes she would fall from the bed and [I'd find her] ly-

ing on the ground. I even found her asleep near the door when I came back from work to feed her. It must be that she fell to the ground and crawled there. At night the two slept with me, one on each side. You know there was always bed-wetting when they were young. I used to sleep in the wet bed. (Ming)

In the locality, mothers almost always sleep with their babies instead of sleeping in separate beds. Ming slept with the two little girls at night, and as she mentioned, there was always bed-wetting. She also said, “I did not mind hard times. I did not mind whether he [her husband] helped or not. He worked hard for the family.” Ming added that her husband was very fond of children and would “help” her when he had time.

To balance housework, care work, and the collective work, mothers would ask their older children to take care of the younger ones or to help with cooking. It was common in rural villages to see older siblings caring of younger ones. Older sisters, in particular, would be given the responsibility to help with childcare. Sansao, a 76-year-old woman had seven children. She would ask her first two children, both girls, to cook breakfast and to take care of the younger siblings.

My daughters were able to do it at the age of seven or eight. Now I'll tell you how hard my life was then. When my second daughter was seven or eight years old, she cooked breakfast for the family² while her elder sister attended the younger siblings. After coming back from the early morning work, I went to the kitchen to see how breakfast was cooked. I smelled some bad smell there. I asked my daughter what it was. She said she didn't know. Seeing the lid of the cooking pot on the ground, I picked it up and saw there was something on it. I thought it must be some food, but it turned out to be child excrement. You see I wanted to earn work points and it put my life into such a mess. I could not blame a child of eight years old for it. Life was really hard in those days. (Sansao)

When rural parents placed their priority on earning work points, they also asked their male children to help with either cooking or child care, as was the case with Yilan, whose first two children were sons. Yilan remembers that she went to work three times a day and asked her 14-year-old son to cook breakfast and her 12-year-old son to take care of the younger siblings.

I had to ask them to do this because my husband and I wanted to earn more work points. In fact, my husband looked after the cattle of the production team. He was busier since he had to feed the cattle after work when people went home. I had no way but to ask my children help. You know, boys were naughty. When my first son did not want to do cooking, he would ask his younger brother to do it. It would be okay if the younger one obeyed him.

Otherwise, they would quarrel, or even fight with each other. They would cry and blame each other when I was back from the early morning work. Of course, I had to cook breakfast. (Yilan)

Mothers took the responsibility for sick children, because fathers could earn more work points. Usually, mothers would carry their children to the brigade clinic to see a doctor. Lan, a 70-year-old woman, stated:

I still remember I had to carry my sick daughter on my back to the clinic. I could not ride the bicycle and we did not have one. I carried her on my back all the way there. He [her husband] had to earn work points, and I could not wait for him to come back. You know I had six children. It was my responsibility to attend to a sick child. (Lan)

Village women's stories evoked my memories of my own childhood. I remembered that my mother would bring me to the work site on fine days and ask me to play with other children of a similar age when their mothers were also working. I also remembered that some mothers would simply leave their children playing in the village when they went to work. Children that misbehaved, once left alone with their peers, would climb trees looking for young birds in their nests, or fight with each other for children's reasons. Sometimes this caused conflicts between their parents. In some families, therefore, older brothers or sisters were forced to quit school in order to help with childcare. This was the case with Kelan, a woman in her 40s. She was the first of five children in the family. Her father was a worker in the nearby factory; her mother was in poor health. Kelan did not remember when she began to take care of her younger siblings, but she did remember that she carried her younger sister to school on fine days and let her play outside the classroom. However, she had to drop out when she was in the third year of the primary school.

Regarding the farm work, housework, and care work that women did in the collective time, Yewen, a rural elderly man, said: "Women worked the hardest and suffered the most."

Childcare and the household responsibility production (post-1978)

Gale Summerfield (1994) observes in his research on rural China that married women remain in agricultural work, which is now centered on family farming. As men migrate for urban work, the share of women in the agricultural workforce has grown (119). My data point to similar findings; male migration results in the phenomenon of "the feminization of agriculture" in the locality. A village leader said that nearly every adult man in the village did out-migrating work, leaving farm work, housework, and care work to women.

With men migrating to cities for work, the farm work, as well as the housework and care work became women's responsibility. Kelan, a 48-year-

old rural woman, related her life story in the early years after the economic reforms. She said that in the mid-1980s, her large, extended family of three generations was divided in two: her father-in-law lived with her family and her mother-in-law lived with her brother-in-law's family.³ Her straw-roofed house was too old to protect the family from summer rains. On rainy days, she had to use umbrellas inside the house to protect objects and furniture from dripping rainwater coming through the roof. Usually, heavy rains kept her awake at night and made her fear that the shabby house would collapse. With a bitter smile, Kelan said she had to also lay her infant son under an umbrella on rainy nights. To earn money to build a new house, her husband migrated for work, leaving all the family responsibilities to her: farm work, housework, and care work. She was also responsible for raising two heads of cattle to sell in the market, which added to her work load. In summer, she would gather green grass to feed the cattle. When she went to work, if the weather was fine, she would bring her son along.

I had to bring my son with me to the field on fine days. When he wanted to sleep, I spread a coat on the ground, laid him on it, and covered him with another coat I brought with me. After I gathered green grass for our cattle, I would carry my son and a heavy basket of green grass alternatively back home. I had to wash the green grass clean in the nearby pond and cut it into smaller pieces before putting it into the feeding trough. (Kelan)

When asked if her husband could quit his out-migration work to help with the farming, Kelan responded with a sigh: "We needed to earn money to build this house [referring to the house in which they lived]. Also, my father-in-law was not in good health. We had to save some money." Kelan added that a couple of years after the family division her father-in-law had a stroke and lost the ability to take care of himself. She took care of the him, helping him take medicine, changing his clothes, and doing his laundry by hand. There were no washing machines in the village in the 1980s. This heavy triple burden reduced Kelan to skin and bones, she said. When she went to visit her own mother, her mother cried to see her bony, thin daughter.

Daughters-in-law in extended families get much more help with household work than their peers in nuclear families. Their parents-in-law do more of the farming and other household work such as cooking and cleaning up after each meal. When infants become toddlers or school children, grandmothers and grandfathers will take care of them to enable the young mothers to do paid work. This is the case with Ying. During the early 1980s, she had out-migrating work together with her husband during the day and came home after a day's work to arrange everything for her children.

He [her husband] drove the tractor for transportation. I accompanied him to help loading and unloading goods. I left my children with their grand-

father. I returned home every day to do the housework and care work, such as making steamed bread or cooking some dishes for the next day. I also did laundry after coming back from a day's work, since my father-in-law was not able to do this well. I did not have a mother-in-law. (Ying)

As is noted in the village research, women make adjustments to meet their family's needs whenever it is necessary. Young mothers will likely provide substantial care for their infants even if they have parents-in-law to help as rural people do not hire babysitters or nannies. Rural people put a lot of emphasis on care work, including care for other family members such as care for the sick and elderly parents. To them, care work is an indispensable part of family life. As one participant claims, "Without this [care work], you may not work for money, not work for grain. You may not have interests in work. Without people, what is the use of money? Without people, nothing becomes important." Villagers regard out-migration as work for cash income, farming as work for food, and housework and care work as their own work. They take care of the housework and care work for their own families. Children are the future generation, and the future of their parents.

Based on the late 1980s and early 1990s survey data on families and households, Laura Sanchez and Elisabeth Thomson (1997) examined the effect of the transition to parenthood on the division of labour among U.S. couples. They claimed, "Motherhood increases wives' housework hours and reduces employment hours. Wives' traditional gender attitudes reduce their employment, but not their housework" (747). Childcare is sometimes enjoyable, but it is also tiring and is a significant responsibility. Xing said her husband would rather do cooking than caring of their 5 years old son. She said her son was mischievous and restless. She had to keep an eye on him every minute he was awake otherwise he might run away without her knowing when he left. This is similar to Jan Windebank's (2001) research findings on dual-earner couples in Britain and France. She notes, "[T]he care of young children is a 24-hour-a-day job. Parents must either be permanently available themselves for pre-school children and outside school hours for the over fives/sixes, or must find someone else to replace them" (281). Margrit Eichler (1997), from her research on families, policies, and gender equality in Canada, forcefully argues, "[W]omen all over the world do most of the unpaid housework and caring work, while at the same time doing a substantial portion of the paid work" (60).

As Judd (1994) puts it, today it is common for grandmothers to provide alternative childcare. Feinian Chen (2003) claims that there is no evidence to support such a norm in historical China. Childcare was strictly the mother's responsibility, not the grandmother's. The duty of a daughter-in-law was to serve her mother-in-law and alleviate her burden, rather than the other way around (560). However, Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter (1990), noting the social obligations and mutual responsibilities of Chinese households, observe that membership in a particular household does not imply that social

obligations are limited to members of the household. Grandmothers continue to take care of their sons' children, so that their daughters-in-laws can work, whether they are members of the same household or not (216).

Comparing the collective production system with the household responsibility production, the former was uniformly arranged and strict in timetable while the latter was more flexible. More often I discovered that women took advantage of the flexibility of doing farm work and arranged their schedule according to family needs, such as doing field work after sending their children to school, bringing their toddlers to the field in the morning when it was not too hot, or cutting green grass as forage in the late afternoon. Rural women regarded the flexibility in performing agricultural activities as *ziyou*, meaning freedom. Conducting research in rural China, Judd (1990) found that, "A keynote in women's discourse and strategies in rural China is the concept of freedom. Rural women themselves speak of this in direct and practical terms in relation to choices they do or do not have available to them ... free from previous constraints, women will be able to exercise initiative, demonstrate ability, and achieve success more readily" (59).

Changing notions of fertility

China initiated its family planning policy in 1979. It was managed as a top-down process. The first few years of its implementation met with hard resistance, as Deborah Davis and Stevan Harrell (1993) contend. "The state, by implementing the planned-birth campaign, initially put itself at cross-purposes with just those cultural rules that shaped the pre-revolutionary Chinese family. It later had to compromise and loosen the restrictions, at least in the rural areas. In 1989, any rural couple whose first child was a daughter was extended the option of having an additional child" (Cooney and Li cited in Deutsch, 2006: 367). My data show that the one-child families in the village where I conducted research started to appear in the early 1990s, though birth rates in the village were on the decline for some time, as shown in the following table.

Birth Rates in the Village by the Year of Marriage/Per Couple	
Years	Number of children
1950-1959	6.3
1960-1969	3.3
1970-1979	3
1980-1989	2
1990-2005	1.5

China's family planning policy, however, is not the only factor that led to declining birth rates. What other factors contributed to the decline in the birth rates in rural China? Here are the stories of two couples that only had one child that might provide some answers. One couple married in 1990; they have a 13-year-old son. The other couple were married in 1993 and they have a 12-year-old daughter. Linyan, mother of the 13-year-old, came from a southern province and belonged to an ethnic minority. Linyan said that the woman leader in charge of birth control in the village told her that she might have a second child, but she and her husband decided not to. Being the first of nine children in the family, Linyan was responsible for a great deal of care work when she was still very young. Also, in her in-law's family, there were conflicts when her parents-in-law were alive because of old-age support among the married brothers and between her and her mother-in-law. She said, "What is the use of having more children? One is enough if we can provide a good education." The couple took pride in their only son who did well in school. The second couple, Anjia and Guochao, had a similar story. It was Guochao, in his mid-30s, who said that he thought girls and boys were the same. He said he was the youngest of six children in the family. He saw the quarrelling between his mother and sisters-in-law. Family poverty forced him to quit school for out-migrating work at the age of 13:

Just think, a boy of 13 went to work in a construction site, and worked with adults and as an adult. We decided to have one child, so we could have more time and energy to earn money for our own old-age support and for our daughter's education. Suppose I have one mian bao, [Chinese for western bread], my daughter may have the whole thing. If I had two children, they would have to divide it. The same is true of the financial support needed for my daughter's education. (Guochao)

Guochao continued, "Talking about old-age support, sons and daughters are the same. Just think how my own brothers treated our parents." There were also some other young mothers with only one child who intended to continue out-migrating work as they did before marriage, though it was difficult for them to say whether or not they intended to have second children when their first ones were only several months old. It is true that few women disputed that women's lives were better now than in the past when women had more children. Karen Hardee, Zhenming Xie, and Baochang Gu (2004) claim that China's one-child policy, however, placed women—particularly those in rural areas—in a situation where they were pressured by the government's child-bearing requirements on the one side and by society's preference for sons on the other. There is no doubt that "women's status is higher now.... Women of [the young] age all have [paid] jobs" (73). It could be concluded that the reduced fertility rate enabled young mothers who were in their 20s and 30s to find urban opportunities for paid work to improve their standard of living,

which, in turn, led to a rise in women's status in the family.

The village data showed that the younger cohort of men and women received relatively more education than their elder generation, with some exceptions such as Guochao who had to drop out of school for out-migration work. Young people had more opportunities to work in cities, so they were influenced by state propaganda on birth control from a young age. They had different perspectives on having children than did their parents. Also, rural parents, as parents elsewhere, wanted to provide their children with the best education possible. In terms of the decline in fertility rates, Yunxiang Yan (2003), referring to the demographic factor, claims that young parents in the 1990s, born in the early 1970s, grew up in a social environment where birth control was emphasized as a fundamental strategy for national development. This is in sharp contrast with the social norms of their elders who grew up with the traditional ideology (209). These changing notions of fertility lie both in the state family-planning policy as a restraining factor and in the young people's changing notions of having children.

Conclusion

The shift of state policies from the collective production to the household responsibility production has had significant impact on childcare in Chinese rural contexts. Under collective production, women had to place priority on the collective production, which made it hard for them to balance farm work and childcare. When men migrated out for urban jobs after the economic reforms, women endured a triple burden of farm work, housework, and care work. In rural China, as is elsewhere in the world, housework and care work are forever women's responsibility and constitute unpaid work.

Regarding the notion of having children, the economic reforms and family-planning program have changed the traditional concept that many children bring much happiness. Rural people, particularly young people from their own life experience and that of their parents, come to realize that many children might not bring about happiness to the parents or to the children. They prefer to focus their parental love on giving the one child they have more attention and care, and on providing them with good education.

¹Villagers divide a day's work into three sections, i.e., the early morning work from sunrise to breakfast at around eight or nine o'clock; the morning work from after breakfast until lunch at noon, and the afternoon work from after lunch until sunset. In the summer, afternoon work starts after villagers take a short nap. This working pattern is also known as *ri chu er zuo, ri lo er xi*, meaning "start work at sunrise and rest at sunset."

²In rural villages, breakfast used to be porridge and bread, together with pickled vegetables if they had some in the household. They did not have any other kinds of cooked dishes. Otherwise, children could not manage to do the cooking.

³This is one of the ways for the old-age support in rural areas, i.e., elderly parents might live in the same house, but have meals separately from their sons' families.

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The Daughters of Myrtle Baptist Church *Womanist Consciousness in Motion*

The Daughters of Myrtle, founded in 1921, is a black women's church club in a predominantly black church in West Newton, Massachusetts, a majority-white suburb eight miles west of Boston, Massachusetts. While other scholars have examined black women's roles within the church from denominational perspectives and as they relate to the larger black women's club movement, this article employs the extended case study method and explores how women in this predominantly black suburban community exemplify womanist consciousness and practice within their local church.

The Daughters of Myrtle club was founded in 1921 when Pastor Wade Ryan recruited seven young married women to help with a regional New England conference sponsored by Myrtle Baptist Church. These seven black initiates of West Newton, Massachusetts, a majority-white suburb eight miles west of Boston, were mothers and, as such, their community activism was rooted in womanist and cultural mothering ideals (Abrahams, 1996; Edwards, 2000; Harley, 1990; Lawson, 2000). Womanism is activism embedded in daily experience. Black women practiced womanist actions and strategies before this term was coined, however, by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker, who uses it in *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose* (1984) to describe the perspective and experiences of “women of color.” A need for the term arose because the early feminist movement, which was led by middle-class white women advocating social changes, such as woman's suffrage, overlooked diversity within women's experiences. The movement focused primarily on gender-based oppression, and ignored oppression based on racism and classism. Yet black women had been exercising agency within oppressive situations for long periods. The term “womanism” indicates action within culturally determined positions, and provides a racialized and often class-conscious reflection of the

political, social, and spiritual linkages between women of color and society. In practice, it bridges personal and political activism, not only for the sake of self, but also for the sake of culture and community. This article employs the extended case study method and explores how one small group of church mothers exemplified womanist consciousness and practices (Dodson, 2002; Higginbotham, 1993; Weise, 2004). This consciousness was enacted through community mothering, an ethos based on nurturing and rearing children according to collective means and ideals. Community mothering is grounded in womanist practice, combining Patricia Hill Collins's (1991) concept of "other mothering," Cheryl Townsend Gilkes's (2001) belief that mothering is a form of community-based political activism, and Katrina Bell McDonald's (1997) contention that mothering is activist due to its collective and empathic nature. Although the women of Myrtle Baptist Church did not claim to be womanist, their actions express womanist consciousness and praxis (Carlton-LaNey, 1999; Baer, 1993; Cannon, 1995).

Historical overview of Newton's black community

Relatively small numbers of African Americans have lived in Newton, Massachusetts, since 1765 (Vital Records of Newton). Settled by Europeans in 1630, Newton was first a section of Cambridge, Massachusetts, but became autonomously incorporated in 1688. The population divided among fourteen villages, with West Newton being one of the oldest. Because Newton is bordered by the Charles River on three sides, most of its nineteenth-century industrial development took place along the riverfront (Dargan, 2000: 27). Historical records reveal that 18 African Americans lived there in 1765; most were enslaved. Slave holding in Newton and in Massachusetts was not widespread, and was legally barred in 1783. Newton was becoming a home for free black women and some white Anglo-Protestant abolitionist women. Louisa Addison, for instance, migrated from Prince Georges County, Maryland, in 1849, carrying her freedom papers in a handmade silk bag (Holzman, 1979).¹ Upon her arrival in Newton, as few as ten blacks lived in the area. Ellen Jackson, a white abolitionist, was one of her new neighbours; she was instrumental in founding the Newton chapter of the Freedmen's Aid Society in 1865 and became a lifelong supporter of the Tuskegee Normal and Hampton Institutes.²

After the state abolished slavery in 1783, Newton's black population remained in the single digits or low teens for more than a century. In 1865, there were only 14 blacks out of a population of 8,978, but by 1875, the population of Newton was 16,105, and the black population had grown to 130.³ The combination of employment opportunities, transportation, and housing made life in Newton a possibility for working-class blacks. In 1874, the *Newton Journal* observed that in West Newton and the immediate vicinity, "some colored persons, men, women and children have established themselves, and have prospered in their labours, some having purchased homes. Also, they are

industrious and prudent, serving faithfully in their various positions” (“West Newton”).

In his 1914 book, *In Freedom's Birthplace: A Study of the Boston Negroes*, John Daniels briefly discusses the emergence of black suburbanites. He mentions the late-nineteenth-century creation of black churches in Malden, Medford, Brockton, and Newton, all towns with close proximity to Boston. Daniels does not pay special attention to the emergence of black suburban communities, but there is some recognition of the early growth of these communities. Daniels states:

Instances of Negroes living outside of distinctively Negro neighborhoods were exceedingly rare 'till twenty to thirty years after the [Civil] war. Then the number of such cases began to gradually increase, and today [1914] from 5 percent to 10 percent of the Negroes in Greater Boston [meaning suburb] live in predominately white neighborhoods. Sometimes a single street or section of a street, or sections of several adjacent streets, are occupied by Negroes, with no others of that race on any of the other streets within a wide radius. More frequently, a small contingent of Negro families will be interspersed among the white residents in a neighborhood. (151)

Interracial connections were not foreign to some of the blacks who arrived in Newton after the Civil War. In Boston, interracial coexistence was considered common. In fact, one study indicates that interracial marriage—marriages between black men and Irish immigrant women—was so pervasive in Boston's black community that by 1877 they accounted for 38 percent of all of Boston's black marriages (King, 1999: 70; Pleck, 1979: 114-115). These interracial marriages occurred within shared class boundaries. The creation of Myrtle Baptist was significant because in establishing the church, Newton blacks crossed class lines and connected with elite whites—both socially and economically.

In 1874, seven of Newton's 130 black citizens decided to found Myrtle Baptist. As rail services out of Boston expanded in the late nineteenth century, suburban homes were built within easy reach of the railroad stations, and new villages developed (Abele, 2000). With this growing technology, in 1874, Newton officially became a “city,” although in terms of its political economy, it remained a suburb of Boston.

Newton's black population lived and worked locally earning a living from their day labourer jobs and domestic work. At least three of the founding members of Myrtle Baptist—Thomas Johnson, Charles Simms, and Lydia Hicks—were able to own and support homes, granting stability to the slowly growing black Newton community.

By the 1870s, black women and men who lived in this neighborhood had paid jobs as domestics and paid labourers, janitors, and bricklayers. Most of their employers were white Anglo-Protestant. Although in the white discourse

of American social class distinctions, people working in those jobs would have been perceived to occupy “working-class” status, in the social maps being drawn by post-Civil War northern African Americans, these families were considered middle class. The income gained from working-class employment provided the material basis for building black-controlled cultural and financial resources. Community economic stability provided black residents with the premise that they too were a part of the changes taking place in Newton, especially the shift from an agrarian to suburban society.

Leading Boston abolitionist and newspaper editor William Lloyd Garrison (1874) was aware of Newton’s small black community and the cordial race relations that appeared to have developed between the suburb’s black and white residents. Garrison viewed it as a “common fellowship,” a successful legacy of abolitionist efforts. Black Massachusetts residents seemed, in Garrison’s eyes, to feel free in “the cradle of liberty.” In reality, after abolition, racism existed in subtle and not so subtle ways in New England society. In Newton, black children had access to public education, yet black churchgoers had to sit in the rear of the white-run Protestant church during worship services (Kelly).

In 1865, there were under 20 blacks living in Newton. However, in the decade following the Civil War, Newton, along with Boston and its other suburbs, attracted new black residents because of its reputation for fairness among freedmen and women (despite ongoing racist practices). Those blacks living in Massachusetts before the *Civil Rights Act* of 1875 moved to new locations in search of more rewarding employment opportunities.

By 1870, Newton began to feel the effects of the economic boom in Boston. Successful white businessmen and their families moved to Newton, thereby altering the homogeneous agrarian landscape. Most were of English descent and identified with one of several Protestant denominations. By the mid-1870s, the Boston businessmen and agrarian landowners came to the consensus that they wanted to make Newton a “garden city” or a suburban space—a city unlike Boston, though Newton benefited from close proximity to Boston, as well as a relatively cost-efficient and easy railroad commute, and plenty of land on which newcomers could settle. A railroad line between Newton and downtown Boston opened in 1830. The less than ten-mile railroad trip between Newton and Boston took 39 minutes and cost 37 cents per person (Abele, 2000). The relatively simple commute for the mostly male work force and merchant community, and ongoing business exchanges between Newton manufacturers and urban buyers, promoted Newton’s economic growth. The “garden city” grew steadily, and cheap labour was needed to sustain Newton’s transition to a suburban place. Ethnic whites and blacks provided that labour source.

During its early period, Newton was in the process of forming a suburban landscape, one that countered the density and diversity of nearby Boston. By the mid-1850s, portions of Newton’s space was suburbanized by the shrinkage

of farmland, the relative absence of multistoried brick and stone buildings, and the construction of spacious single-family homes surrounded by gardener-tended lawns, which were laid out along tree-lined streets within sight of each other. Even with small spaces of urbanity, Newton was considered an “ideal” suburb, with its manicured lawns surrounded by sprawling single-family homes (Jackson, 1985; Daniels, 1914). Kenneth T. Jackson (1985) and John Daniels (1914) acknowledge that blacks moved to the suburbs in the late nineteenth century because they had employment opportunities and could find housing, yet both scholars ignore that black suburban communities created their own suburban social connections. Lisa Y. King (1999) asserts that black Civil War veterans had limited access to the housing market in Boston so a few sought access to outlying areas. These men and their families became vibrant parts of political and social life in the communities in which they settled. I argue that Myrtle’s creation is evidence that blacks did more than just provide domestic and day labourer services for suburban Anglo-Protestants: they created their own social institutions.

Over a number of generations, Newton became increasingly class stratified, with ethnic differences shaping intra-white local relationships. The first generation of low-paid white workers rented homes in underdeveloped areas of Newton that were close to their jobs. By 1870, the Irish, Italians, and Russian Jews accounted for almost one-quarter of Newton’s population. By the early twentieth century, each European ethnic group had organized distinct communities. For example, the Irish Catholics had created four parishes, and the Russian Jews had incorporated Newton’s oldest synagogue in 1911 (Dargan, 2000: 34; Fleishman, 1986). Each European ethnic group created a religious center in close proximity to where the majority of its population lived. Within a few generations, they owned property near their religious centers and used those spaces as focal points for community life. Despite Anglo-Protestant bias, distinct ethnic identities flourished (Dargan, 2000: 34; Fleishman, 1986). Even though blacks shared more religiously with Anglo-Protestants than their Jewish and Irish or female Canadian counterparts, their process of negotiating the suburban landscape has gone unnoticed until this study.

The emergent black suburban identity was embedded in the paid work black residents performed, which enabled them to claim Newton as home. Wages were no higher than what urban blacks earned, and housing reflected this reality (Jones, 1996; Lerner, 1973: 226; Franklin and Moss, 1997: 311). The neighborhood where most of Newton’s black residents lived, known since the 1890s as “the village,” did not have dwellings with sprawling lawns and single-family homes. In the 1870s, a few black families owned homes or rented on Curve Street, and Myrtle Baptist Church soon became the cornerstone of Newton’s growing black community. Curve Street and Prospect Street demarcated the village informally, along with Hicks Street (named for Lymus Hicks, a founder of Myrtle Baptist Church), Virginia Road (the lower half of Hicks Street), Prospect Place, Simms Court (named after the Simms,

another founding family of Myrtle Baptist), and Douglas Street (named for black abolitionist and civil rights leader Frederick Douglass). These streets were blocked off by the Boston Albany Railroad at the intersection of Washington Street, Auburn Street, and parts of Crescent Street.⁴

Newton's black women performed domestic and agricultural duties for wages, and men worked as day labourers and a few in manufacturing. These jobs supported their livelihood in "the village." Both black women and men worked outside of the home in working-class jobs. Black women and men living in a suburban place made equal wages, and when the family unit consisted of male and female joint heads of household, the family benefited.

In the 1870s, more black women than black men lived in Newton.⁵ These single or unmarried women relied on an extended family to help sustain their households, and they did not commute (Jefferson, 1996). One of the factors attracting black women to Newton was a high demand for domestic workers resulted from the shift among whites of Newton from an agricultural and manufacturing suburb to a "garden city" (Ryan, 1913: 24). Wealthy white Anglo-Protestant newcomers wanted servants to accommodate their leisure lifestyle, providing a year-round and more consistent demand for domestics than for day labourers. Employment brought blacks to Newton and enabled them to stay, and the creation of Myrtle Baptist Church signified the beginning of a conscious black suburban organized existence.⁶

The majority of Newton's 200 black female residents worked as domestics. Some were able to accumulate enough wealth to own their own homes or contribute equally to their households, but their activism centered on community mothering. Domestic work provided black women with steady employment. Therefore, Myrtle members of the 1920s and 1930s are categorized as working class or at least lower-middle class, but that should not be an unexamined assumption. Because they lived in Newton, a suburban enclave, black women were considered middle class, yet their lived experience was lower middle or working class—similar to that of urban black women. Although the larger black women's club movement began just eight miles away in 1893, and community mothering ideals permeated this movement, Daughters of Myrtle members chose to perform locally focused activism (Smith 1986; White, 1999; Phillips 1999.)

By the 1890s, black urban and rural women began mobilizing in black social institutions inside and outside the church, creating spheres of influence for themselves and providing relevant services to black community members (Spain, 2000; Morton, 1989; Knupfer, 1996). The libraries, orphanages, settlement houses, vocational schools, kindergartens, and playgrounds provided black urbanites social spaces of ownership and demonstrated a womanist or black feminist community mothering consciousness. Black women were employing public spaces and using the church space as the catalyst for settlement house start-ups, literary clubs, anti-lynching clubs, and other social reformist groups. The national club movement consisted mostly of Protestant members, and

they emphasized education, economic uplift, and the importance of home and women's influence (Giddings, 1984). Noted black women's historian Deborah Gray White (1999) contends that clubwomen rarely compartmentalized their programs, using similar strategies to address the problems of race, gender, and poverty. The strength of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and the Women's Convention Auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention was that they addressed issues on all three fronts (Spain, 2000; White, 1999). The Daughters of Myrtle Baptist maintained a similar model, yet chose to implement community mothering that translated to womanist activism embedded in local service needs.

Womanist praxis at the center

Myrtle women took another structural step toward reshaping their positions of power within the church in 1902, when the Missionary Society, which evangelized black and white community members, delivered copies of their pastor's sermons to sick and shut-in members. They formed the bridge between current and infirmed congregants, maintaining a link between church members and simultaneously reaffirming religious and community ties. As a result, the missionary, mutual-aid function was multidimensional—both religious and social—and culturally relevant to black community members, though open to non-blacks.

The creation of the Jolly Quartet represented the second step toward a larger leadership scope. This group, which met regularly at Miss I. C. Burke's on Sunday evenings, was a singing group that performed church outreach services for the sick and shut-in. It also sponsored events at which invited guests discussed current issues affecting Newton's black residents. For example, on one Sunday in late May 1902, the singing group held a program titled "What Is Needed in the Garden City to Interest the Young People?" Through these programs, Myrtle women provided a space for community dialogue about issues pertaining to their growth and development.

Mothering practices formed the core of such community-based political activism. The program that explored young people's interests carried a dual message. First, it permitted the members of the Jolly Quartet to fulfil their community mothering ethic by allowing the concerns of youth to take centre stage. Second, it revealed the group's desire for youth and the community as a whole to continue feeling politically connected to their suburban landscape. Through the work of the Jolly Quartet, black women were able to fulfil two service functions for their local community: community mothering and political commitment.

A third offshoot of community mothering was the Silver Star Club. Although purely an entertainment group, its activities were designed to raise money for Myrtle Baptist Church, and it also served as a social outlet for its members. By enlisting financial support from black and white non-Myrtle members, it moved Myrtle's name recognition beyond church boundaries. The

Silver Star Club became a social evangelistic ministry on both religious and racial fronts. It also served as a bridge between white and black community members who wished to support the church. The theater and concert events hosted by the club reinforced the boundaries of the community, and further exposed it to artistic expression.

Local womanist activism within the church

For women at Myrtle, the Sunday school was a key site for activism. Community teaching was an occupation many nontraditionally trained religious black women performed to aid church efforts (Gilkes, 2001; Higginbotham, 1993). Women reshaped the Sunday school into a place where students studied social—as well as religious—topics. For example, the school's curriculum enhanced self-esteem through public speaking exercises conducted during holiday programs. Sunday school teachers emphasized women's roles within the Bible and focused on biblical stories that displayed community cohesion. These teachings inspired the students, strengthening their community and religious identities. Church work, especially Sunday school teaching, elevated the status of community mothers years before the Daughters of Myrtle was formed. Hence, the club's consciousness and practice had already been established. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (1988) argues: "Black women community workers have moral power and prestige because they are women who represent the total community's interest and who build carefully a culture of resistance through community work in many critical places."

The Daughters of Myrtle, then, exemplify community mothering because their activities focused around service to youth and the church community. Community mothering provided a protective sphere of encouragement and cultural understanding for youth and the women themselves; mothering practices are often the basis for community-based political activism (Gilkes, 2001). According to bell hooks, black women's struggle against racism (and sexism) infuses their mothering practices inside and outside of their "homeplace." bell hooks (1990) refers to the homeplace as a "site of resistance." She explains, "Working to create a homeplace that affirmed our beings, our blackness, our love for one another was necessary resistance" (46).

Othermothering reshaped the way these women perceived their sense of home, and their modes of parenting. Community mothering within a public place, like the church, comprised a site for resisting racism and sexism and elevating black women's community status, thereby justifying the space of leadership that women developed inside black church ministries, especially the Sunday school.

The Daughters of Myrtle organized their first generation of activities around dual service commitments. Today, this would be categorized as womanist practice, extending sociologist McDonald's contention that "black activist mothering" (another name for community mothering) is a form of activism deriving from a conjunction of empathy for other black women who suffer

or have suffered similar social disadvantages and African American norms of solidarity, responsibility, and accountability (McDonald, 1997). Through activism, black women mingled social reform, motherhood, and religious teaching. As activist mothers, Newton's black Baptist women were engaged in an ongoing process to reshape black womanhood in their church community. As Sunday school teachers, they expressed community mothering ideologies. However, what set Daughters of Myrtle apart was their extension of community mothering not only to community youth, but also to one another. This evolution highlights how a homeplace emerges and womanist or black feminist consciousness becomes practice.

Community children viewed their activist mothers as community service agents. Mr. James Spikes (1996), a lifelong member of Myrtle Baptist, a son of the founder of the Daughters of Myrtle, and the husband of a member, remembers the work these women provided:

Well, they would have programs, and they would have speakers come on the programs. Their principal job, besides taking care of the communion and stuff like that, would be helping with families, take care of girls that needed female assistance of women, who had had children, and they would go into the houses and take care of the houses and clean the houses up and prepare meals and everything.

The women also taught current black history, which always delivered a social reform message of racial uplift and community solidarity. Mrs. Leahora Hill (1996) remembers that in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Daughters of Myrtle ordered copies of the *Carter G. Woodson Journal* from the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. This journal was circulated among members, and they shared its research on topics relating to black experiences with their Sunday school classes. At Myrtle Baptist Church, the Sunday school was a window through which black children from “the village” connected to the greater black community.

When Pastor William Wade Ryan asked a group of young married mothers to help supply the refreshments for an annual meeting, he had no idea that he was founding a significant organization for his church. As Helen Lomax (1961) wrote in a church archive correspondence about her observations of the creation of the Daughters of Myrtle, Rev. Ryan was thankful for the help with conference and selected the group's name. He highlighted these women due to their limited activity influence in the church.

The founding members were Mrs. Lorena Spikes, Mrs. Josephine Williams, Mrs. Helen Lomax, Mrs. Olivette Cooper, Mrs. Mary Meredith, Mrs. Mary Spikes, and Mrs. Octavia Walker. Their motto demonstrates the duality of their mission: “to support the church and community spiritually and financially whenever and wherever possible” (C. Haywood, 1996). Providing service to the church by garnering financial support, organizing social events

for the congregation, and holding educational meetings for youths became the pinnacle goals of the group. Their unwritten goals were to provide informal support to one another and to enable the group to serve as a homeplace for each member (hooks,1990).

Each member was scrupulously selected by current members based on the “care” model (Jefferson, 1996). Candace Haywood had migrated to Newton from rural North Carolina as a teenager in 1928, and she became a member of the Daughters of Myrtle in 1938. Mrs. Haywood explains:

When I first joined, I was the only young person of my group. And I was sure that the others would be joining. They told me that they had been watching me and seeing what I was doing and they had decided [I] could qualify to come into their group.

Membership in the Daughters of Myrtle was reserved for a select few. Reverend Howard Haywood (1996), the current pastor of Myrtle Baptist Church and a lifelong church member whose mother was an early member of the Daughters of Myrtle, explains:

I would think that at one point that people would say that the Daughters of Myrtle was an elitist organization. Not everybody was welcome into the Daughters of Myrtle. They [other church members] said those people [DOM members] think they are better than anybody else.

There were a multitude of auxiliaries at Myrtle Baptist, such as the usher board, the flower club, and the willing workers club, all of which provided support for the worship service and the pastor. For its first forty years, Daughters was “the club.” Daughters of Myrtle members were leaders in other church clubs like the Young People’s Society, the Booster Club, and Senior Missionary Circle. For example, Candace Haywood (1996) was the chairperson of the Booster Club (fund) in 1942 and had been a member since the early 1930s; she later became president of the usher board. During the early part of his 30-year pastorate at Myrtle Baptist, Reverend Ford appointed Mrs. Haywood to head up the Community Parents Organization, which raised money for a neighbourhood playground. Mrs. Candace Haywood did not envision herself as a leader at the time of her appointment. Reverend Ford convinced her otherwise:

He said, “If anybody can talk to people, you can and I want you to get this together.” I said, “Reverend Ford, I don’t have time,” and he said, “Oh, yes, you can. I’m trying to get together a group of parents to supervise children on the playground. Who else are you going to get to get this organized?”

Mrs. Haywood enlisted the Daughters’ help; the playground was a com-

munity project and so fit their mission. Even though they were not directly credited for organizing the campaign, community members knew who the Daughters were, as well as who was on the Community Parents Organization; the lists were similar. Being assigned leadership roles was not unique for DOM members. Mrs. Lorena Lomax was the president of the Senior Missionary Circle in 1936, and a Sunday school teacher. Candace Haywood (1996) remembers some of the financial support projects the DOM provided to the church in its first generation:

We used to have different things at different times of the year. Our [DOM] job at that time was to pay the electric bill and the gas bill. And that was a big undertaking. And when we had meetings, we discussed what we needed and how we were going to earn the money.

The Daughters of Myrtle was not the only organization to support the church and foster community mothering ties, but it was the only one whose primary mission was to serve the community and its members.

The ties that bind the Daughters of Myrtle together

The Daughters of Myrtle created a supportive environment for its members that provided lasting meaning for the group. The DOM is indeed an example of what hooks calls a homeplace. Candace Haywood (1996) puts this process into perspective:

When you heard [a] member of the DOM [was sick] or having a baby or whatever, you just put your things down and went to her house and you didn't ask her "What can I do?" You just went right along and you did what you saw needed to be done. And that's the way they did all the time. I remember, I think it was Trustena [Edwards] who said, "You know, we're just like sisters."

Even male members of the community commented on the support system that Daughters of Myrtle members had created for themselves. Mr. James Spikes (1996) remembers how the DOM members would aid sick mothers:

When there were families who were having problems, like the mother or something was sick, some of the Daughters would constantly take food over, they'd fix meals, and they'd go over to the house and stay with the sick person. I guess sometimes, someone would spend the night. 'Cause in those days, up here, the families didn't spend the night in the hospital.

Community mothers rarely compartmentalized their social reform work, often using similar strategies to address different dilemmas (Spain, 2000: 106). Daughters of Myrtle members fostered the community mothering ethic by

sponsoring programs that shared their club's purpose with the community. The mother-daughter teas demonstrated the club's adoption of middle-class social graces. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis (1994) writes about black female domestic workers in Washington, D.C., who organized clubs so they could use the secondhand garments, china, and linens given to them by their employers. At first, these gatherings mimicked the social activities of white female employers. The speaker would be a member of the Daughters of Myrtle and topics would range from edifying the mother-daughter relationship to the need for higher education and stronger family values, always preaching to the converted.

An authentic cultural phenomenon evolved through which domestic clubs carried a separate and higher meaning than reusing employers' hand-me-downs; they became a mode of social expression for black suburban women. The teas served the dual purpose of informing attendees about black women's contributions to both society and the local community and reaffirming their ongoing cooperative process. They became a place where local black women were honoured for their contributions to community efforts and a staple in homeplace development. The Daughters of Myrtle worked together to create this space, which affirmed their heritage and the supportive relationships they had constructed as a public act of opposition against negative stereotypes.

Another crucial service conducted by the Daughters of Myrtle was one that demonstrated their community mothering ethic: socializing community youth. The members saw a void within white, male-dominated Newton public schools, and wanted to endow their children with racial and gender pride. To facilitate this goal, the Daughters started the Junior Daughters of Myrtle and the Sunshine Band. The Junior Daughters met monthly and focused on educating youth about black history outside of their suburban place; the Sunshine Band taught young girls domestic chores. Mrs. Rosalie Carter Dixon (1996) remembers Mrs. Helen Lomax, a Daughters of Myrtle member, leading the Sunshine Band. By the 1940s, the exclusively female group had learned how to sew and knit while being mentored about various life issues (Dixon, 1996). The Sunshine Band was Myrtle's rendition of a mother's club. Kimberly Phillips describes mother's clubs as places where women gathered to engage in lively discussions about parenting and race-conscious topics. Mrs. Leahora Hill (1996) grew up in the village and later became a Daughters of Myrtle member. She recalls that her public school education provided no information about the contributions of African Americans to society. Instead, she learned about her culture as a junior DOM member in the 1930s when the elder Daughters taught her black history:

On Thursday afternoon, they [the Daughters of Myrtle members] took a group of us girls, we went to Josephine Williams' [a founding member] to sit around her dining room table, and they told us about Carter G. Woodson [the founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and Culture

and the Journal of Negro History]. They ordered material and gave us some insight into black history.

Black contributions to society were neglected in the Newton school system; therefore, Daughters of Myrtle members took it upon themselves to introduce children to works of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and publications like the *Journal of Negro History*: “In the 1930s, we used to come every Friday afternoon for Friday afternoon Bible school” (Hill, 1996).

The group was financially independent and collected dues to support its programs. Mrs. Cora Jones was the treasurer for many years. The dues ranged from 25 to 50 cents per meeting. Mrs. Lillie Jefferson (1996) remembers the due paying system also: “We used to put money in a kitty so when we would go away to play or whatnot the money would be there. And when Cora Jones, who was the treasurer for years, retired, she had all these little envelopes with people’s names on them. If you had 50 cents in an envelope, she was able to give it back to you after she retired.”

In the 1930s, Trustena Edwards, the Daughters of Myrtle president, organized one-day summer outings to Maine. When Candace Haywood (1996) was invited to join the Daughters of Myrtle in 1938, one of the major enticements was these trips to Maine:

They took trips to Maine every summer and at that time, it took you a whole day to go to Maine, have a picnic, and come back. Everyone went (our husbands drove). We just enjoyed ourselves. If you could see us [laughter]. We went all out. (Haywood, C., 1996)

Candace Haywood (1996) went on to remember that, “We took our shoes off and went into the water ‘cause that’s good for your feet.”

The day trips were the only vacation time most of the members had. Daughters of Myrtle members created such spaces to treat themselves as worthy of leisure activity. The trips built self-worth and the ethos of a home-place. Creating leisure activity for themselves and by themselves made their social needs visible to their families and communities, thus reflecting a true community ethic and exercising womanist principle.

Conclusion

Myrtle Baptist Church is still thriving today, with well over 500 members. The Daughters of Myrtle is now an intergenerational group and its community mothering activities persist. The DOM’s history illustrates the evolution of black, womanist values, specifically how a group of black suburban women practiced community mothering and provided mutual aid for their church community, supporting and nurturing one another while educating and guiding community youth. The Daughters of Myrtle is womanist effort in action. This study has highlighted how black women living in a suburban place created

community links inside and outside of suburban boundaries as crucial steps toward developing black suburban womanist identity. Creating a multi-tiered community enabled black women living in a suburban place to create an identity that extended the boundaries of race, class, and gender.

In the late nineteenth century, blacks immigrated to Newton, Massachusetts, to work as day labourers for middle-class Anglo-Protestants. Black women were domestics, and black men performed seasonal day labour. Most lived in extended families and shared housing within a four-block radius of the West Newton railroad station. In 1874, seven black Newton residents (four women and three men) left a majority Anglo-Protestant Baptist Church and founded the first black Baptist church in Newton: Myrtle Baptist Church. Scholars of Newton and suburban history generally paid little attention to the mobilizing actions of black residents within suburban boundaries. The creation of Myrtle Baptist Church receives little recognition in Newton history, and even less attention is paid to the roles that female founders played in the first generation of the church. The core discussion of blacks in suburbia centers on the interaction between black and whites, not black community dynamics.

Paul Douglass (1968) authored one of the earliest studies of black suburban life. First published in 1925, *The Suburban Trend* argues that the main reason blacks resided in the suburbs was to serve wealthy Anglo-Protestants as domestics and service workers (97). Meanwhile, Anglo-Protestants were in the suburbs to fulfill the dream that John Stilgoe (1988) describes as representing “the good life, the life of the dream, the dream of happiness in a single-family house in an attractive, congenial community that inspires...” (2). Blacks were viewed as supporters of this idea through their labour, but not as full participants. Yet in examining the roles and choices of black women, an active participatory community life unfolds—one where obstacles are acknowledged, and strategies are developed to create a substantial community life, one beyond the narrow view of servitude.

Women supported the pastors’ leadership and their own leadership missions by organizing church clubs to realize the tasks each pastor proposed. After the church fire tragedy, women spearheaded connections with urban black congregations for financial support and social connections to help realize the rebuilding of Myrtle Baptist Church. Women were also the main contributors for the initial building funds within Newton’s black community.

The creation of the Daughters of Myrtle Baptist Church in 1921 extended the earlier generations’ conception of black suburban womanhood. Early DOM members thrived on their visibility in church business and their connectedness to outside community efforts; this became the beacon for their brand of black suburban womanhood. What the Daughters later added to this conception was the notion of self-care. Daughters of Myrtle members performed church and broader community work, but also took time for group retreats and relaxation. In addition, they combined community work with rituals of black middle-class etiquette.⁷ This reinforced class distinctions within Newton’s black community,

with Daughters of Myrtle members exemplifying an ethic of black female middle-class collective consciousness.

Stephanie Shaw (1996) and other social scientists present the concept of collective consciousness as a process of mixing individual and community social responsibility. The concept of social responsibility and collective consciousness is performed by black women “to enhance individual development in a manner that regularly demonstrates, frequently demands, and often yields individual postures of collective consciousness and social responsibility” through visible service measures (Shaw, 1996: 6). These are service measures that often cross-geographic and spatial boundaries. The Daughters of Myrtle worked within the rubric; their service work was located at Myrtle Baptist Church, but extended well beyond Church boundaries.

¹Addison is Reverend Howard Haywood’s great aunt. Reverend Haywood is the current pastor of Myrtle Baptist Church (1985–present).

²The Jackson Homestead at the Newton Historical Society has the original copy of the 1888 letter written by Booker T. Washington. The letter is written to the Newton Center Woman’s Club, thanking them for their \$5 donation for Tuskegee Normal School (now Tuskegee University).

³In 1875, there were approximately 18,000 non-blacks and 130 blacks.

⁴Myrtle Baptist Church 120th Anniversary Calendar (part of the church archives).

⁵1870, Newton City Directory, Newton Room, Newton Public Library.

⁶Minutes, Lincoln Park Baptist Church, 1871–1874, West Newton, Massachusetts, p. 1, Chapter 2.

⁷The Daughters of Myrtle sponsored Mother-Daughter Teas and sponsored plays and classical musical events at the church.

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Swallow Light

In September trapped sun, for the first time,
Carrie and I sat on her back porch, and talked
about growing old and holding fast to life.

My mother said, *Learn to be happy.*
I almost asked,
What is the curriculum of joy?,
but I didn't want to sound like Mr. Rogers.

Recalling childhood is like swallows
flying light in a blackberry bramble.

For our mother's birthday, my brother and I once bought
a beer mug from Woolworth's, a wild woman's image,
wide grin, flared nostrils, like the monstrous other that scares
Abbott and Costello in *Africa Screams*, and my brother and I
carried our amazing find to Carrie who aped our glow, even
though we then knew she'd never win an Oscar.
She still has the mug.

Remember Maxine Porter?
In middle age, she said, I have wasted much of my life.
I don't want to waste any more. I hope I have the heart for life.

She told me about Canada Day, how she went
to Margaret Bowater Park and amidst the crowds

celebrating, saw noone she knew.
One time, I knew everybody in Corner Brook.

She knows the peril of a long healthy life,
the memory seared in longing.

*Carrie said, Stuart Stuckless joined the circus, hurt his back,
got a settlement, everything taken into account, he did well.*

On Wednesdays when Carrie baked bread she wore
faded blue mauve pink panties on her head to prevent
stray hairs falling into the dough, and the kitchen window
always steamed up, the world condensed, hidden.

*You can never have enough life
to do all the things you want to do.*

Carrie told me stories about other mothers
like she was seeking the ingredients for a stone soup
we might enjoy together in late lean winter days.

*When Daisy Parsons got Alzheimer's,
her sons Fred and Ted cared for her
like two nurses on Dr. Kildare.
They couldn't put her in a home
because they needed her old age pension.*

Memory is a winter window, stained frost, light etched lines.

*Every Sunday Francis Dove's mother went to church.
Francis parked his car at the bottom of Lynch's Lane,
and slid his mother down the hill on a piece of linoleum,
and the neighbours always said, Like a saint, nothing stops her.*

I grew up on winter weekends eating moose meat stewed
long and tender, and my mother's homemade bread
spread with Good Luck margarine and Demerara molasses,
mouthfuls of sticky soft sweet steam.

*Did you know if you eat a lot of beets you will pee red
and scare yourself half to death with fears of death?*

Like the pond skater knows shadows, fissures, vibrations,
the resonant text read hypertextually, poised between

Carl Leggo

sun and night, I no longer know the way back, but
Carrie's wisdom like fridge magnets might guide me still:

*always remember to forget
what you don't know won't hurt you
always remember somebody nice
kindness somehow stays with you
be open to new ideas
we're getting older like everybody else
be nice to want nothing
everything is good*

As a boy Carrie always bought me McGregor Happy Foot socks.
The other day I bought a pair. I might even take up dancing.



*Carl Leggo and his mother, Kerry Leggo, summer 2007.
Photo: Lana Verge.*

Mothering in Slavery

A Revision of African Feminist Principles

Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) and Harriet E. Wilson's Our Nig (1859) were published within two years of each other, at the end of the American Renaissance and before the start of the Civil War. There are many coincidences and several commonalities in their stories, but the fabric of Jacobs's and Wilson's lives is remarkably different, not due to the accident of their positions as northerner and southerner, but due to the varying degrees to which each can utilize and extend the tenets of cooperation, self-reliance, adaptability, gender complementarity, and liberation, tenets that are used in our time to describe African feminist principles. Both women ultimately face heartbreaking obstacles and stark choices as mothers, and both do their best by their children. On the surface it may seem that Jacobs, the author who has a clearer connection through her upbringing to African feminist principles, is best able to mother; ultimately, though, both women must abandon their children and eventually lose their sons due to class-related issues, while both find extraordinary success for themselves. In other words, while the ability to follow the tenets of African feminism do lead to more success, the parallels in the outcomes of Jacobs's and Wilson's very different lives seem to show that their ability to follow African feminist principles alone cannot account for their failures and successes.

Measures of success, whether in career, parenting, or contentment, are far from universal. Cultural contexts and definitions of success vary widely, and often, a Western feminist/academic orientation simply cannot appropriately read texts that rely on other values. Western feminism often favours individualism, often gained through competition and opposition, as a measure of success (Steady, 1996: 7). By these measures, the authors of the autobiographical texts in this study, Harriet Jacobs and Harriet E. Wilson, often appear to have failed—not only as career women and authors, but also as mothers. Instead, and has not

yet been directly attempted, we should look at these women's lives through the lens of African feminism, a framework which values "parallel autonomy, communalism, and cooperation for the preservation of life" over Western values (Steady, 1996: 7). Through this lens, we will see that Jacobs and Wilson do meet measured success, particularly in light of their most difficult life circumstances.

African feminism as a philosophy stems from the positive features of precolonial African tribal life, in which women worked cooperatively with men, were valued in parallel ways with men, and gained status throughout their lifetimes (Steady, 1996: 5-6). African tribal structures of polygamy, shared market responsibilities, and communal parenting allowed women to experience "a more limited, rather than absolute, form of patriarchy," (Steady, 1996: 6), and these traditional values enhanced female slaves' abilities to survive, and sometimes thrive, even amid the most inhumane of circumstances. According to Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (1996), "the two most dominant values in the African feminist theory, which can be traced through a time perspective into the New World, are developing survival strategies and encouraging self-reliance through female networks" (25). Due to differences in their communities and development, it will be shown that Jacobs is better able to utilize these principles, and thus meets with an expanded success over Wilson, particularly in the area of parenting. However, both women adapt survival strategies and self-reliance measures to fit their own needs, and these strategies empower them to make the best choices for themselves and their children, even when these choices might seem (to their contemporaries and to this later audience) like the wrong steps. African feminism empowers Jacobs and Wilson to not only survive, but to thrive, to varying degrees, as mothers and as women. They will not be able to overcome all of the hardships of slavery and poverty, but by their own definitions, they succeed.

One writes a slave narrative, and one a pseudo-slave narrative. One story takes place within a southern community, and the other on an isolated farm in the North. Both are mothers, and both must abandon their children, at least for a time. One text is factual with names changed to protect the innocent; the other is fictionalized with characters made into conglomerates to suit her narrative's purposes. Both authors have difficulties in getting their stories published, and both need authenticators to help their audiences believe in the miracle of their literacy. One succeeds in securing her freedom in the North, only to end her text in the disappointment of being without a home to call her own; the other is able to leave her oppressors at the predetermined age of 18, only to fail at making enough money to support herself and her son. Eventually though, and after the texts have finished, each of these women do find success, on their own terms and within their communities—one among freed slaves in Washington, D.C., and the other among (white) Spiritualists in Boston.¹

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859) were published within two years of each other, at the

end of the American Renaissance and before the start of the Civil War. There are many coincidences and several commonalities in their stories, but the fabric of Jacobs's and Wilson's lives is remarkably different, not due to the accident of their positions as northerner and southerner, but due to the varying degrees to which each can utilize and extend the tenets of cooperation, self-reliance, adaptability, gender complementarity, and liberation, tenets that are used in our time to describe African feminist principles. Both women ultimately face heartbreaking obstacles and stark choices as mothers, and both do their best by their children. On the surface it may seem that Jacobs, the author who has a clearer connection through her upbringing to African feminist principles, is best able to mother; ultimately, though, both women must abandon their children and eventually lose their sons due to class-related issues, while both find extraordinary success for themselves. In other words, while the ability to follow the tenets of African feminism do lead to more success, the parallels in the outcomes of Jacobs's and Wilson's very different lives seem to show that their ability to follow African feminist principles alone cannot account for their failures and successes.

Mothering is difficult work in the best of circumstances, but mothering within slavery or under the threats of racism and poverty can prove to be heartbreaking and almost impossible. Wilson, for all intents and purposes, is in a position of indentured servitude that amounts to slavery from the time she is a young girl until she is "released" at 18. During her period of servitude and after, Wilson is often isolated and forced to rely only upon herself for survival. While Jacobs does not have her freedom "given" to her at any age (it is finally bought by her new boss around the age of 35²), she grows up within the love and care of her immediate and extended family, a family who has become prominent through their hard work in the small community that keeps some of slavery's worst excesses in check. What I am interested in examining here are the differences of experience as they occur between two mothers in the similar circumstance of being oppressed for their gender and race, and who are, therefore, extremely limited in their material means because of their oppressions. These differences, though, still render roughly similar outcomes in terms of mothering and overall success, a fact which shows the necessity of reworking and extending the practical applications of current African feminist theory.

Studies of Wilson and Jacobs have not yet made the connection between their roles as mothers and African feminism. This connection is vital in the attempt to understand more fully their strengths and limitations as mothers. Diedre Badejo (1998) suggests that it is a worthwhile task to "revisit African Women's histories on the continent and in the diaspora" through the lens of African feminism (96). While Badejo's task, to redefine African American womanhood through an African feminist lens from slavery to the present, is much broader in scope than my own argument, her model makes clear that this revisiting is as essential to writers like Jacobs and Wilson, as was the revisiting of writers like Susan Warner (1987 [1850]) and Fanny Fern (1986 [1855]) through

a (white) feminist lens in previous decades. In order to understand Wilson and Jacobs's ability to survive and nurture through such traumatic conditions, we must first understand the source of their strength, which lies in their "collective ancestral knowledge" and philosophies (Badejo, 1998: 100). Andrea Benton Rushing (1996) notes the strength of African American women should be appreciated despite slavery, not because of it, due to their African heritage: "our mothers were strong: families sold apart; men unable to discipline their children or protect their wives from brutal beatings and routine rape; women working cotton, rice, and sugar cane" (122). She continues, "Perhaps our people survived because our ancestors came to the Americas from West African cultures that did not share the bourgeois European ideal of women as delicate dependents whose 'place' was in the home" (122). These extremely inhuman circumstances called for a philosophy of life and reserves of strength that came from a foreign soil, and gender ideals that did not replicate the European notions of women who fared best within the comforts of home.

Filomina Chioma Steady's (1996) definition of African feminism as a "humanistic" feminism is descriptive and useful for our purposes:

To summarize, one can say that because of the need for male-female complementarily [sic] in ensuring the totality of human existence within a balanced ecosystem, and because of the negative and destructive effects of historical processes and racism on Africa and its people, values stressing human totality, parallel autonomy, cooperation, self-reliance, adaptation, survival, and liberation have developed as important aspects of African feminism. These are important concepts in developing a framework for the study of women in Africa and in the diaspora. (18)

If we follow Steady's (1996) definition, it would seem that the author who is best able to model complementarity between men and women and cooperation with others, while relying on herself through adaptation for survival and liberation would be the author who is able to find the most success in her personal and public life. While my argument will show that this is not necessarily true, it is important to apply this lens to these slave narratives, for as Gwendolyn Mikell (1997) notes, African feminists and Western feminists (and thus, African and Western women) have often been at odds because their "reference points. . . have been totally different. . . . Western women were emphasizing individual female autonomy, while African women have been emphasizing culturally linked forms of public participation" (4). Therefore, we must first understand that definitions of success in personal and public life will be different from the typical Westernized view of success through agency and individual voice.³ Instead, I wish to read these authors in terms of their success with "their culturally linked forms of public participation," namely through their mothering and their public lives following their narratives.

It is important to re-read Wilson and Jacobs through the perspective of their foremothers and contemporaries, all of whom would have shared ideals about womanhood that starkly opposed many ideals of Western womanhood. We can assume that Jacobs, in particular, would have had at her disposal a “collective ancestral knowledge” that would have given her the means by which to appreciate and adapt African feminist principles to her day-to-day life. Badejo (1998) explains that through naming ceremonies, oral literature, and iconography, “[p]roverbial wisdom and practical application of the [African-feminist] philosophy” was trained into all Africans “from infancy” (100). Therefore, these early-instilled beliefs would have been carried through the Middle Passage into the new world: “Despite the trauma of the Middle Passage, and the terror of enslavement, the women and men who arrived in the West did so with our cultural and self-identities shaken but well-established” (Badejo, 1998: 101). The extent to which African feminist principles were carried through the generations and utilized can help us now understand the motivations for African American women’s actions, and can also help us better understand their heroic successes, especially when viewed in the light of their extreme hardships. However, these principles are not the whole story. It is true that Wilson is more removed from African feminist principles due to her upbringing and isolation, but she still attains amazing successes, personal and public, despite her circumstances, relying primarily upon the principles of self-reliance and adaptation for survival, and she extends the call for cooperation and community to include her sympathizers and friends, almost all of whom are white. Jacobs also meets much success in the arena of motherhood and public life, relying more firmly upon all of the central tenets of African feminism; however, the limits of African feminist principles under the harsh circumstances of slavery, racism, and poverty are aptly demonstrated, especially when so closely followed by Jacobs.

A bedrock notion in African feminism is the belief in parallel autonomy between men and women, or the ideal of mutual respect and cooperation between the sexes. It is not necessarily that men and women should have the same responsibilities, but that each should respect the other’s role, abilities, and contributions to the community and/or family unit. Wilson’s Frado not only never had a matrilineal line through which to learn the African keys to her own survival in America, but she never had a model of complementarity between her parents. The conditions of her birth and upbringing deprived her of not only examples of strong men and women working side-by-side and parenting, but also of a community that is the extension of cooperation within the home.

Critics largely assume that the conditions of Frado’s life, if not the names and exact specifics, match those of her creator. Thanks to the work of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1983), followed by Barbara A. White (1993), and recently by P. Gabrielle Foreman and Reginald Pitts (2005), the outline of Wilson’s life is known.⁴ For the purposes of this article, I will refer to events from the

text as happening to Frado, and events that happen after the text ends as happening to Wilson. Frado was born to a white mother, Mag, a “ruined” white woman who married Jim, a black man who was willing to take care of her. Their relationship was doomed from the beginning, because both Mag and Jim assumed that he was inferior due to his race. She married him only to keep from starving (Wilson, 1983: 13), and he married her because he was kind, but also because he thought she was “as much of a prize to me as she’d fall short of coming up to the mark with white folks” (11). Two children followed quickly, and to care for his family, Jim basically worked himself to death (15). Jim is characterized by kindness, thoughtfulness, and generosity to the point of self-sacrifice. While Frado’s memories of her father seem positive through Wilson’s depiction, they are vague and short-lived. Her mother’s disgust for her father and his color carried through to her feelings for her children; she calls them “black devils” and sees them only as a burden (16). Mag seems to have been incapable of affection or nurturing, probably due in part to her extreme poverty, but also to her position of outcast within her community. Mag and her children were never accepted; children chanted “Black, white and yellor!” as Mag, her new (black) lover, and children walked down the street (21). Not only does the community reject Frado, but Mag does too when she abandons her to a woman she knows to be a “she-devil,” Mrs. Bellmont.

Being raised by a self-loathing white woman as an outcast does not give Frado basic nurturing, let alone training in what we now refer to as African feminist principles. In contrast, the earliest memories of Linda, Jacobs’s protagonist, are so positive that she does not even realize she is a slave “till six years of happy childhood had passed away” (Jacobs, 2002: 445). Linda’s life is very close to Jacobs’s own memoir. Jean Fagan Yellin (2002) has corroborated (through the letters and papers of Lydia Maria Child, Amy Post, Nathaniel Willis, James Norcom, John S. Jacobs [her brother], and Jacobs herself) that Jacobs, did, indeed, write her own story (vii–viii). It is, of course, always true that we cannot take for granted that all information in an autobiography is “accurate” in any exact sense, but it is clear that Jacobs experienced first-hand what she describes Linda going through. Again, I will refer to Linda to discuss events specifically described in the book, and Jacobs when discussing events outside of the text.

Unlike Frado, Linda’s early childhood is filled with positive examples of parallel autonomy and cooperation between her parents, and these traits extend into her larger community, a community which is peopled by her grandmother and her uncles, but also by black and white people who are sympathetic to her and her family, and who protect, directly and indirectly, whenever possible, all slaves within the town from the unmitigated violence that occurred so frequently on larger plantations in the country. Linda’s mother was a favored slave, the “foster sister” of her mistress (447), and so Linda herself was a favorite of the mistress as well, and even thought of the mistress as “almost a mother” (448). Linda was never asked to do any difficult tasks,

but rather enjoyed her childhood relatively worry-free: she says, “those were happy days—too happy to last” (448). Her mother was treated well, and her father was somewhat independent, hiring his own labour as a carpenter. The parents worked together to raise their family, the mother having somewhat light duties from her sister/mistress, and the father being “allowed” to handle his own affairs and hire his labour out for the price of \$200 a year (445). Both are referenced throughout the text as positive role models throughout Linda’s life; their graves are a place of solace, and thoughts of them keep her strong. In particular, she credits her father with “teaching [his children] to feel that they were human beings” (451).

Their cooperation with each other extended into their place within the community; they were well thought of, and therefore so were their children. Linda’s mother had a good role model herself, in the form of Linda’s grandmother, who was a pillar of the community. Both black and white patrons relied upon her for baked goods and advice (446). Eventually, when the idyll of Linda’s childhood ends due to her mistress’ death and her transfer to Dr. Flint, a sexually-abusive master, it is her grandmother’s networking that steps in to protect her from his worst schemes.

Frado does not have the benefit of a community who will protect her. When she is abandoned to the Bellmont’s farm, she leaves any protection a city-setting *might* have afforded. She must become, at approximately six years old, almost entirely self-reliant. Food in the form of bread is provided, along with scant clothing (not even shoes most of the year), and an extremely small and uncomfortable bed chamber (27), but she must become a maid of all work for the house and do what she can to avoid the jealousies of Mary and the beatings of Mrs. B. Between the physical abuse, exposure, and malnutrition, Frado’s health is severely compromised, making self-reliance later in life, after her period of indentured servitude, almost impossible. Still she finds ways to network within the small outlets she does have, at least for a time: school, church, and the Bellmont farm. At school she quickly, unlike her “foster sister” Mary, becomes a favorite: “no one could do more to enliven [the children’s] favourite pastimes than Frado” (33). At church she impresses the minister and congregation with her seriousness, so of course Mrs. Bellmont disallows any more church activities, probably in part because she fears her abuse will be found out (103). Since school and church are both taken away, Frado must network in the only place left, the farm. She gains the sympathy of the farm workers, only to be disciplined later by Mrs. B for befriending them: “The men employed on the farm were always glad to hear her prattle.... [Mrs. B.] did not fear but she should have ample opportunity of subduing her when they were away” (37). Finally, she is left in a position where she has only the less toxic members of the Bellmont family to somewhat rely upon. Unfortunately, though Mr. B. seems kind, he is unable or unwilling to protect Frado on a regular basis. He decides she should go to school, but does not reinstate her education when her duties are needed at home, refusing to “live in hell”

for “rul[ing] his own house” (44). His two sons, James and Jack, take a deep interest in Frado as well, and seem to befriend her and protect her, but as Ronna C. Johnson (1997) has pointed out, their motives may have been less than innocent, and may have actually been motivated by keeping their sexual abuse of Frado silent. Still, both Jack and James prevent Frado from getting beaten on several occasions; however, neither one of them is ultimately able to help her escape Mrs. B.’s home and tyranny.

Neither Frado nor Linda are free, economically or legally, and therefore both are called upon at a young age to practice self-reliance. While Linda has the benefit of a loving upbringing, and one that modelled and passed down the tenets of parallel autonomy and cooperation within families and communities, Frado does not have either of these benefits. Still, both show skills with self-reliance and adaptation, skills they both need just to survive (for Frado, physically, for Linda, with her virtue intact), and skills that will help them both mother and, eventually, find success on their own terms. Linda relies on herself to prevent her rape at the hands of Flint, and adapts the meaning of virtuous womanhood for herself and other slaves. Frado finds sympathizers and friends in sometimes unlikely places; she also adapts herself to whatever type of work might best provide for herself, and eventually, for her son as well.

Linda grew up surrounded by her parents, and after their deaths, by her grandmother, brother, and uncles, all of whom took an active interest in her protection and growth. In fact, it is this protection, the opposite of Frado’s exploitation—physical and possibly sexual as well—that convinces Linda she is better than Dr. Flint’s lewd suggestions for her to become his concubine. But as is often the case with good daughters, daughters who want to please morally righteous parents, Linda is unsure how to protect herself from his advances, other than to make herself unattractive to him by receiving the attentions of another man. She has a strong community and the benefits of its protection, but she too must learn how to rely on herself. When she chooses Sands as a lover and becomes pregnant, her grandmother threatens to exile her from her community: ““Go away!” she exclaimed, “and never come to my house again” (504). Ultimately though, the grandmother realizes that she cannot forsake Linda, and Jacobs makes one of the hallmark adaptations of true womanhood for slave women: “I know I did wrong.... Still, in looking back, calmly, on the events of my life, I feel that the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standards as others” (502). While Linda was taught to be and would have liked to remain pure, the one inviolable dictate for true women, she could not, and not only adapted her life and her children’s life to this reality, but also managed to “lift the veil” from this invisible and terrifying aspect of slavery in the antebellum North.

Linda’s experiences seeing the parallel autonomy of men and women through her parents, the cooperation of a community, and the self-reliance and adaptation necessary to own her sexuality, prepared her well for the task of mothering her son and daughter. While the birth of her son was not an

entirely joyous occasion for her, as she felt shame for her position of not being able to give her lover's surname to her child (528), she found fulfillment in her role as Benny's mother. She named him after her uncle, a man strong enough to escape the evils of slavery, making clear her desire from the beginning of his life that her son should be free. When her daughter Ellen came along, she knew special pains were in store for her as a slave girl, for "*they* have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own" (526), but loved and protected her daughter fiercely, not even allowing a gift of a gold necklace to be put around her daughter's neck, for "I wanted no chain to be fastened on my daughter, not even if its links were of gold" (528). Many instances of her loving care of her children are catalogued throughout the text. As children, she provided for their comfort and safety, with the help of her grandmother. She petitioned frequently, despite the risk to her person, for their freedom from Dr. Flint, through purchase by their father. And finally, when she realized that her children would be used as pawns in the game to keep her under Dr. Flint's vindictive rule, she made plans for her own escape (545).

Frado must also strike out on her own. Linda's adaptations have to do with changing definitions of true womanhood to satisfy her position as a slave. Frado's adaptations have to do with finding work that will allow her to survive. Frado is released at the age of 18, with a 50-cent piece from Mrs. B. (117), but because of her lack of education, good nutrition, and general guidance and nurturing, Frado is ill-equipped to deal with the demands of the world on her own. She does not, as Mrs. B. predicts, miss the (in)stability, not to mention, abuse, of her life with the Bellmont's, but it is true that making a living proves exceedingly difficult for her. With the help of white people within her community, some who care for her and others who take her in for the money the county pays them for their services, Frado tries becoming a nanny (118), making garments (117), creating straw bonnets (124), and selling hair dye (130).⁵ Each career option is met with more sickness, because she is forced to "keep up her reputation for efficiency, and often pressed far beyond prudence" (118). In other words, she could never make enough to support herself in an amount of time or with a level of effort that would still enable her own health.

Frado, like Linda, becomes a mother after a period of self-reliance and adaptability to new and trying circumstances. In the midst of trying to take care of herself through her own labor, Frado meets her husband-to-be, and the father of her child. Samuel is a fugitive slave giving lectures on the abolitionist circuit, and "as people of color were rare [in Frado's new home], was it strange she should attract her dark brother" (126)? Without a community of family and friends, and certainly without any connection to an African American community, Frado is led astray by Samuel. Abandoned often by her husband, left pregnant, and finally told he was never a slave,⁶ Frado must make the most of her situation (128). He does rescue her and their son "from charity" on one return, but he dies young of yellow fever (129).⁷

For different reasons, extreme poverty in Frado's case, and the desire for freedom in Linda's, both women now embark on a path in their mothering that is perhaps the most dreaded and misunderstood act for a mother to commit, abandonment. And yet, while both circumstances are difficult, neither is surprising. Frado cannot adequately provide for her son, which is understandable because she is so alone; she was abandoned herself, left without a community or family to care for her, and was never connected in a real way to the principles of African feminism. Linda, cherished and protected, one who has all of her children's basic needs met regularly, must abandon her children for her freedom, and her hope for their freedom. Poverty and isolation have the same effects as that peculiar institution, slavery. Community, parallel autonomy, cooperation, none of these can save Linda from the need for liberation. And poverty that is borne out of lack of opportunity coupled with racism is not easily, if ever, solved. Both women make the ultimate sacrifice for their children—they give them up so that they may (all) be saved.

Unlike Mag abandoning Frado to the Bellmont's, Linda's "abandonment" of her children was well thought out; like Mag's abandonment of Frado, it was done out of desperation, not for the problem of poverty, but for the crisis of survival through escape. Linda, of course, made sure that her children would be cared for by her grandmother and Uncle Phil, and her brother William. And then there is the reality that Linda was actually within the same household as her children for seven long years; she never left them at all, until she had to for fear of being discovered. She took great pleasure in watching her children play through a hole she drilled with an auger (569). She could hear her children's voices and laughter, and longed to be with them. When her children had chances to go North themselves, she sent them, despite her personal sadness, and trusted that they would all be together again.

Conversely, Wilson's son is barely mentioned in the story itself. She is not able to experience the stereotypical idylls of motherhood because she spends too much of her time trying to find food and shelter for both of them. Finally, leaving her son in the care of Mrs. Capon, she can concentrate more fully on getting her health back and making money (129). She, like Mag, leaves her child for work, but with a caring family, thus redefining motherhood (and Mag's transgressions). Beth Doriani writes, "...Wilson suggests a new definition of motherhood: loyalty and self-sacrificial love to the point of separating oneself from one's children so that they may benefit" (217). Claudia Tate in "Allegories of Black Female Desire" (1989) also discusses Wilson's redefinition of motherhood as "Frado's resolve to preserve the bond between herself and her child, and...affirm her own autonomy as a black person who was a motherless child who became a woman who became a mother who was compelled to be a writer" (112). Motherhood is her lot and her concern, but she never idealizes it. Instead, she demonstrates its difficulties for a single, poor, black woman. Wilson (and Frado) worked hard to keep her son out of the "poor farm," a place full of mentally ill and sometimes violent people (White 25).

We know from Allida that “[a] kind gentleman and lady took her little boy into their own family, and provided everything necessary for his good; and all this without the hope of renumeration” (136).

Wilson ends her narrative with Frado still struggling for survival, but never giving up. In fact, the writing and publication of *Our Nig* is yet another attempt at self-reliance, and a new adaptation, to a career as an author. Asking for “patronage,” it is clear that she needs to sell her book in order to survive. Cynthia Davis (1997) writes, “...with her own and her son’s health failing, Wilson decided to write *Our Nig* in hopes of once and for all easing their lot” (486). Unfortunately, George dies less than six months after the publication of the book (Gates, 1983: xii). Without a firm upbringing and separate from a true community, Wilson’s son pays the ultimate price, while both suffer the ill effects of poverty and lack of choice, even as “free” people, in the antebellum North.

Linda, also, loses a son and is left at the end of Jacobs’s text without a home of her own. Eventually, mother and children are reunited in the North, and they even reconnect with Linda’s brother as well. Unfortunately, while the North provides freedom, it does not provide freedom from racism, or freedom from the possibility of being recaptured. Furthermore, work is hard to find and inconsistent, and at times members of the family are flung to far places just to make ends meet. It is not that Linda would prefer to be back in the South, as that would mean she and her children would be under the control of Dr. Flint; however, it is clear that without her grandmother and her community, it is somewhat harder for Linda to make ends meet, and it is definitely more difficult to keep her family together.

There are happy moments of reunion, especially “the winter [that] passed pleasantly, while [Linda] was busy with [her] needle, and [her] children with their books,” after Linda had rescued her daughter from the Hobbes’ household (643). Unfortunately, the need for work led Linda to return to her former employers, the Bruce’s, after she “put Benny to a trade, and left Ellen ... [to] go to school” (643). Later, Ellen is put in boarding school by her Uncle William, and Benny goes to California with the same uncle to find work (650-651). We never hear from him again. At the end of the book, Linda is still working for the Bruce family, caring for children and a house that are not her own, but also sending money to her daughter and finding time to write and eventually share her story with others, in the hopes of speeding the end to slavery.

Both Wilson and Jacobs led difficult lives: both had children in difficult circumstances, both were forced to abandon their children (in the children’s best interests), and both lost a son. It would seem, then, that in the end, Jacobs’s ties to African feminist principles and her own community did not and could not protect her from the horrors of slavery and its aftermath;⁸ it would also seem that Wilson’s distance from African feminist principles and community did hinder her, but did not ultimately lead to far different outcomes than Jacobs’s. As I began this paper I assumed that Jacobs’s life’s outcomes, and

the fruits of her mothering, would indeed be more positive than Wilson's. I quickly realized though that the forces facing these women were stronger than any of these admirable values. And yet, these women proved to be stronger than their oppressors. Through different life courses, they both found public success later in life.

Without her community, Linda must once again rely upon herself to see to her own and her children's welfare. Unfortunately she is not able to keep her son near her, but eventually, through the sacrifices and love she bestowed upon her daughter, she is able to work side by side with her daughter in aiding the freedmen in the South after the Emancipation Proclamation, specifically by opening the Jacobs Free School in Alexandria, Virginia, with the help of her daughter (McKay and Foster, 2001: 387). They are close throughout the rest of her life, and Jacobs's articles, published in the *Freedmen's Record* (Jacobs, 2001b) and *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (Jacobs, 2001a) continue to motivate people in the North to help the cause of her community, in broader terms, the southern African American community. At her death in 1897, she is eulogized by the noted Reverend Francis J. Grimke (2001).

Wilson too is able to find success in her later life, perhaps spurred on by the untimely death of her son. She, like many others suffering grief from high infant/child mortality rates in the nineteenth century (Foreman and Pitts, 2005: xli), becomes attracted to Spiritualism, eventually finding a husband, a community, and a career. At *Our Nig's* publication, Wilson could not have foreseen that she would marry again, that she would become, for a period of little more than a decade (about 1867-1880 [Foreman and Pitts xii-xiii]), a sought-after lecturer and spirit mediator, that she would have material comforts for a time. Wilson lives to a riper age than her readers would likely guess; when she dies in 1900 she is 75 years old (Foreman and Pitts, 2005: xliii). Unfortunately, even with this success, and the possible reconnection she may have felt with her son, or "spirit father" (Foreman and Pitts, 2005: xlii), the facts of Wilson's early poverty circumscribed her potential to mother in very real ways. While she is clearly an excellent example of a woman who was self-reliant and adaptable, in the effort to survive and find her own liberation, her mothering was curtailed by the lacks in her life and situation.

Both Wilson and Jacobs live to relatively ripe old ages, having both met with personal and public success. But if there is one way in which Jacobs *clearly* succeeds more than Wilson due to her exposure to and use of the tenets of African feminism, it is in the type of work that Jacobs eventually settles on, a work that is arguably a "culturally-linked for[m] of public participation," to quote, again, from Mikell (1997: 4). Her schools helped innumerable freed men and women. However, I have no doubt that Wilson found her work as the "coloured medium" satisfying and meaningful as well, regardless of how we might read that work today. African feminist principles helped both women, but in the end, their roles as mothers were challenged by their race and class status in ways these principles could not completely overcome. Motherhood

had to be adapted to the point of self-sacrifice, and even then, these women could not save their boys. Still, the principles of African feminism, when seen in their adaptations, allowed these women far greater success than relying on Western principles alone would have.

¹Harriet E. Wilson becomes known as “the coloured medium” in Spiritualist papers, such as the *Banner of Light*, which frequently listed her services and addresses; according to P. Gabrielle Foreman and Reginald Pitts (2005), she gave lectures throughout Massachusetts, but her home became affiliated with Boston starting in 1868 (x).

²Jean Fagan Yellin (2000) notes that she was born “about 1815” and that sometime around 1850 her freedom, and that of her children, was purchased by the Willis family (204).

³A brief summary of genre concerns related to Wilson’s text will here be followed by concerns about voice related to Jacobs’s text. Here are just a couple examples of the discussion about *Our Nig*’s hybrid genre: Stephanie Smith (1994) demonstrates that a woman in Wilson’s position would be unable to completely identify with the conventional identities offered in male slave narratives or women’s sentimental novels (138). Beth Maclay Doriani (1991) notes that women’s conventions are too far from Wilson’s reality to be represented without changes (204). She notes that Wilson further changes the rules of slave narratives by creating a fictional account of her slavery (207). P. Gabrielle Foreman (1990) connects both Wilson and Harriet Jacobs with an African American woman’s tradition of writing that “blur[s]” slave narrative and sentimental fiction (313). Further than just revising the slave narrative, Phyllis Cole (1990) notes that Wilson distinguishes herself from the abolitionist fiction by telling her own story more radically than Stowe or Douglass (26-27). Hazel Carby (1987) calls the text “an allegory of a slave narrative” (43). Harryette Mullen (1992) provides an excellent summation of Wilson’s use of and problems with these two genres: Wilson and Jacobs “...place the slave narrative and the sentimental genre in dialogue, and often in conflict, in order to suggest the ideological limits of ‘true womanhood’ or bourgeois femininity, while they also call into question Frederick Douglass’s paradigmatic equation of literacy, freedom, and manhood in his 1845 *Narrative*” (245). Mullen (1992) also adds to the generic discussion the idea of an oral literacy that resists and informs *Our Nig*. Finally, Thomas Lovell (1996) is appropriate to end our generic discussion about Wilson because he asks us to move away from it. He sees Wilson’s text as critiquing both sentimentalism and the economy. In fact, he sees this work as trying to modify the market by enhancing it with sentimental values (though not the ones proposed by the Bellmonts) (27). While it is clear that *Incidents*’ genre is less complicated as a slave narrative (with sentimental conventions), voice is a major discussion in work on this book. Jacobs makes use of two voices, the mature cataloguer of

life's events, and the young girl going through various "incidents." This narrative duality is similar to *Ruth Hall's* two voices, and serves similar purposes of creating action, garnering sympathy, and justifying behaviour. In fact, Daniel W. Schmidt (1992) notes this similarity between the two texts in his article "Writing a Self in *The Coquette*, *Ruth Hall*, and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*." His argument shows that these women writers created a public self (the personae of Linda Brent) to protect the private self (Harriet Jacobs) (13). The two voices as I see them are not completely analogous to the two voices Sharon Davie (1993) notes, the "discourse of shame" and the "discourse of defiance" that she traces throughout *Incidents*, but her work shows that Jacobs is clearly both pandering to and rebelling against her white, middle-class audience (88). Margaret Lindgren (1993) also discusses the duality of voice in the text by showing the ways in which she both "entices and confronts her audience" (33). In a related argument, Mark Boren (2001) traces the movements between first and third person throughout *Incidents* to show that Jacobs moves to the more distant third person voice in "moments of violation" as self-protection (41).

⁴Wilson's life story was first reclaimed for today's audience by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s Introduction and Notes in the 1983 edition of *Our Nig*. Barbara A. White revised his findings in an article from 1993, followed by a much more in-depth study, particularly of Wilson's later life, by Gabrielle P. Foreman and Reginald H. Pitts in the 2005 edition of *Our Nig*.

⁵New information shows that her hair dye business was actually successful for a time, as bottles of "Mrs. H. E. Wilson's Hair Dressing" still exist (Foreman and Pitts, 2005: ix). However, even though this business is reported as successful in Allida's letter, it is still clear that her failing health will not allow her to continue these labors, so she finds herself in need of money for her son when she publishes the book.

⁶Joyce Warren (2000) writes, "How angry she must have been to realize that the abolitionists not only did not help her in New Hampshire as a child but were 'hungry' to hear her husband's story (though rambling, illiterate, and false), whereas they did not want to hear her story about racism in the North, although it was well-crafted, literate, and true" ("Performativity" 16).

⁷Elizabeth Breau (1993) makes an interesting case for the poetic justice of his dying in the Deep South of "yellow" fever, or cowardice (458). The fact that Breau views the appended letters as "parody" may allow her to see the humor here, without also noting the seriousness of Wilson's situation.

⁸Of course, it has never been assumed that practicing the principles of African feminism *could* protect one from the horrors of slavery, racism, and poverty, only that these principles could indeed help and lead to survival and, possibly, to liberation.

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Audre Lorde – “The Woman Thing”

Most literary criticism on Audre Lorde (1934–1992) uses Lorde’s self-identification as a “black, lesbian, feminist, warrior, poet, mother” as a starting point. Lorde not only repeatedly claimed these multiple identities in her prose, but also constructed in her poetry an embodied self in whom these elements of identity are in constant play. In constructing this diverse self, Lorde locates her lived experience of the body as the source of her texts. This is true also of her poetry dealing with pregnancy and childbirth. My discussion of Lorde will focus on two poems—“Now that I Am Forever with Child” and “Bloodbirth”—dealing with childbirth in most disparate ways. Interestingly, reading “Now that I Am Forever with Child” in isolation yields an experience of pregnancy and birth that is disconnected from race, sexuality, or feminism. If, however, we read “Now that I Am Forever with Child” together with “Bloodbirth” a far more complicated reading of Lorde’s experience of motherhood emerges.

For Lorde, an account of becoming a mother that is not gendered, raced or sexed, that does not call for political change, needs to be re-imagined in a social and symbolic context. At the same time, however, the angry, chaotic, social and symbolic construction of “Bloodbirth” needs to be tempered by the personal, loving intimacy of “Now that I Am Forever with Child.” My paper will suggest that although these two poems in a sense undo each other, they also have at their root the same vision of the possibility of becoming a self through a recognition of the other.

... I was changed forever. From a woman whose “womb” had been, in a sense, her head—that is to say, certain small seeds had gone in, and rather different if not larger or better “creations” had come out—to a woman who ... had two wombs!

—Alice Walker, “One Child of One’s Own.”

The above epigraph, excerpted from Alice Walker’s startling essay “One Child of One’s Own: A Meaningful Digression within the Work(s)” (1983), imparts the impression that the issues facing African-American poets in respect to pregnancy and childbirth are similar to the issues facing the white poets. Indeed the sense of being able to create from both body and mind seems to unite women poets; the fears, the ambivalence, and the juggling of writing and mothering that Walker describes at the outset of her essay have been described by numerous white women. Yet as Walker’s essay develops, it becomes apparent that while certain issues are held in common by black and white women poets writing about maternity, the differences are vast.

Walker highlights the stark divisions between white and black women, and even black and white feminists, going so far as to claim that “perhaps white women feminists, no less than white women generally, can not imagine black women have vaginas” (Walker, 1983: 373). Being black and female, or as Walker (1983) sardonically says, “in the condition of twin ‘afflictions’” (377), places the African-American woman poet in a particularly precarious position. While the Black power movement of the ’60s and the feminist movement of the ’70s improved the conditions for the acceptance of African-American women’s poetry, these poets have neither been subsumed into either of these movements, nor has their work received adequate critical attention. African-American women poets continue to define themselves in opposition to white men, white women and African-American men.

The broad question that arises, and that African-American literary theorists have debated mainly in relation to fiction, is whether this sense of identity fuses itself into an African-American woman’s literary aesthetic that has discernable features. The two poems by Audre Lorde (1997) analyzed in this paper seem paradoxically both to affirm and negate the existence of such an aesthetic. The poems “Now that I Am Forever with Child” (1997c) and “Bloodbirth” (1997a) deal with childbirth in most disparate ways. Interestingly, reading “Now that I Am Forever with Child” in isolation yields an experience of pregnancy and birth that is disconnected from race, sexuality, or feminism. As a white, Jewish, heterosexual reader I identify with the poem’s rendering of the experience of becoming a mother and cannot locate differences between the speaker and myself. However, if we read “Now that I Am Forever with Child” together with “Bloodbirth,” a new and far more complicated reading of Lorde’s experience of motherhood emerges. Each of these two poems can be seen as a re-imagining of the other, and together make up a complex re-imagination of the pregnant, birthing and writing self.

The apparent colour-blindness of “Now that I Am Forever with Child,” then, seems to appeal to a shared sex, but it is undeniable that motherhood, including pregnancy and childbirth, resonates differently for African-American women, who have to contend with a unique history that represents womanhood and motherhood in ways foreign to white women. Audre Lorde (1984) was insistent on her self-identification as “black, lesbian, feminist, warrior,

poet, mother” (99). She not only repeatedly claimed these multiple identities in her prose, but also constructed in her poetry an embodied self in whom these elements of identity are in constant play or interaction. “My poetry,” claimed Lorde, “comes from the intersection of me and my worlds” (99). In constructing this diverse self, Lorde locates her lived experience of the body as the source of her texts.

“Now that I Am Forever with Child” (Lorde, 1997c), addressed to the child, opens with a peaceful recollection of pregnancy:

How the days went
While you were blooming within me
I remember each upon each—
The swelling changed planes of my body—
And how you first fluttered, then jumped
And I thought it was my heart.

The quiet, slow tone of these lines conveys the feeling of the speaker during her pregnancy. The speaker recalls each day of her gestation, and each change in her body; she recalls the first quickening of the fetus within, confusing the fluttering feeling with the beating of her heart. At this point she starts separating herself from the fetus: she *thought* it was her heart, but realized that it was a being separate from herself. With the baby “growing heavy/ Against the wind” the speaker envisions the progressive development inside her:

... I thought
Now her hands
Are formed, and her hair
Has started to curl
Now her teeth are done
Now she sneezes

What she in fact envisions is the future growth of the baby outside the womb—curling hair and teeth are not elements of *in vitro* growth. The speaker has a clear vision of the material “otherness” of her child, referring to her as a real person rather than a symbiotically connected and dependent fetus. Her vision of being a mother to a child connects to the title of the poem: although the baby is not yet born, the poet knows that pregnancy is only the first part of motherhood and that a process has begun in which she is “Forever with Child.”

The tranquil tone surprisingly extends to the initial description of the birth: “Then the seed opened./ I bore you one morning just before spring—.” The speaker is in tune with nature; just as the kernel splits towards spring to bear fruit, her womb releases her child “just before spring.” But the birth is not as serene as the opening of a seed. Rather, the speaker describes how “My

head rang like a fiery piston,” locating the tremendous pain and pressure in her head. But this is not a disembodied mental experience of pain; rather the head and the body together birth the baby. The body is at once a part of nature (“the seed”) and a part of history and culture:

My legs were towers between which
A new world was passing.

She equates the act of giving birth to the historical image of a new reign passing through city walls or towers in conquest or discovery, and in this way both elevates her private act and insists on the cultural functions of the body.

The description of birth in the last stanza seems to transcend the descriptions offered up until this point:

From then
I can only distinguish
One thread within running hours
You ... flowing through selves
Toward you.

The anguish of childbirth “from then” blocks out any comprehensible thought or imagery. The only “one thread” pulling her through is the child—“you”—becoming a separate human being, becoming herself: “flowing through selves/Toward you.” No metaphor is adequate to describe the uniqueness of the baby; she is just “you.” In this way Lorde once again expresses an appreciation of the “you-ness” of her child, a distinctive, rare “new world” separate from any other self.

This tranquil, rather uncomplicated, tender poem renders a positive, loving experience of pregnancy and childbirth that emphasizes the bond between mother and child, who are removed in their own world of growth and birth. In opposition “Bloodbirth” (Lorde, 1997a), is a rather violent and far more ambivalent poem, describing both the act of giving birth and the writing of poetry. The entire first stanza (20 lines) is a frenzied outflow of words and associations punctuated by a full stop only at its end. As in “Now that I Am Forever with Child,” the form and tone of the poem conveys the experience, which, in this case, is the chaotic, inexorable event of childbirth. In contrast to the “blooming,” fluttering child in “Now that I Am Forever with Child,” “that which is inside of me” in “Bloodbirth” is “screaming/ beating about for exit or entry.” The poet does not name “that which is inside of me,” but we realize almost immediately that she is discussing both poetry and baby. Indeed this presence inside of her “names the wind, wanting winds’ voice/ wanting winds’ power.” The acts of naming, finding voice and thereby finding power are acts of poetic creation.

The poet is conscious of the difficulty of giving form and expression to her experience, describing her attempts to authentically relate what is happening to her: “and I am trying to tell/ this without art or embellishment/ with bits of me flying out in all directions.” She is striving to let those screaming, beating words inside of her exit her brain, body and heart and enter the world, as a baby, naked, undisguised, unembellished. The hectic flow of the poem is evidence that her words, are indeed “flying out in all directions” but we remember that she is simultaneously relating the pain and loss of control during childbirth. The metaphor of childbirth as creativity and the actual experience of childbirth are so merged in this poem, that we have constantly to remind ourselves that Lorde is describing both processes. This fusion acts in the same way as deconstruction in that it breaks down the binary separation between literal and metaphorical, real and symbolic, experience and representation, natural and constructed.

Further descriptions flow forth, with the speaker seemingly returning to the referent of “that which is inside me” who:

screams memories old pieces of flesh
struck off like dry bark
from a felled tree, bearing
up or out
holding or bringing forth
child or demon

She is at once describing her bodily feeling of giving birth and her narration of the pain of the event; her flesh seems to be “struck off” her body like dead bark and in its stead a child (or demon) is brought forth. At the same time the memories are unpeeled until the dead, meaningless parts are “struck off” and the poem is written. As to the result, the speaker is unsure whether she has birthed a “child or demon,” or whether this is “birth or exorcism.” On one level the agony of giving birth is compared to the travails of exorcising an evil spirit, but on the symbolic level, to release that “which is inside of me” is to release the devil, the darkness, the rage within.

Indeed, Lorde’s poetry and prose are filled with anger, both as emotional expression and as theoretical stance. In her essay “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism” (1984), Lorde discusses the importance of channeling and expressing anger:

Women of Color in America have grown up with a symphony of anger
... And I say *symphony* rather than *cacophony* because we have had
to learn to orchestrate those furies so that they do not tear us apart.
We had to learn to move through them and use them for strength
and force and insight within our daily lives. Those of us who did not
learn this lesson did not survive. (129)

But the demon within is also what Lorde calls the “Black Mother,” an image for the “terror, the chaos which is Black which is creative which is female which is dark which is rejected which is messy...” (Lorde, 1984: 101). Margaret Kissam Morris (2002) points out that although it seems as if the use of “Black Mothers” and “White Fathers” is an essentialist and stereotypical depiction of the instinctive, dark female and the rational white male, Lorde (1984) herself argues against this interpretation (177). Indeed Lorde suggests that the “black mother who is the poet exists in every one of us” (100) regardless of sex or race. Moreover, she claims that she does not “see feel/think as a dichotomy” rather as “a choice of ways and combinations” (101). Thus Lorde is birthing her child, her poem *and* her self. She is birthing or exorcising the “Black Mother” or the poet within. Yet this exorcism does not function to rid the self of the “sinister, smelly, erotic, confused, upsetting” (Lorde, 1984: 101) but to liberate these elements.

Both sides of her parentage, mother and father, are implicated in the birth of her self:

is this birth or exorcism or
the beginning machinery of myself
outlining recalling
my father’s business—what I must be
about—my own business
minding.

The poet mother she is birthing, or the “beginning machinery of myself” is constructed through her confrontation with patriarchal (black and white) expectation—“my father’s business”—of her silence and marginalization—“My own business minding.” These lines provide an excellent illustration of Lorde’s use of *apo koinu* as described by Amitai Aviram (1986):

Almost every line seems to have a sense of its own which is then somehow altered—sometimes drastically—by the following line. Each line is thus held in common between itself and the sentence of which the next line unexpectedly makes it a part. The technique at its most surprising forces us to become estranged from, and to reinterpret, an overfamiliar term. (193)

In the last three lines of the above section of “Bloodbirth,” we constantly revise our reading of meanings. At first we read that she must imitate her father’s business: “my father’s business—what I must be” only to realize that “what I must be/about” is “my own business.” This is once again transformed when the next line tells us that, rather than establishing her own sphere, she must really be “minding” her business. Through her freeing up of syntax by suspending sentence-closure in order to allow the deepest and most chaotic

thoughts and emotions to surface, Aviram (1986) continues, Lorde reveals “the hidden possibilities of meaning in words, especially in their ideological dimensions” (206). I would add that she does not only explore and criticize patriarchal reality in these lines, but by literally giving birth, by writing poetry, by centering her self and by *fusing* these acts as opposed to separating them, she defies patriarchy.

The second and final stanza shows poetry as emerging from the body, or more specifically the birthing body. The speaker asks:

Shall I split
or be cut down
by a word's complexion or the lack of it

Lorde (1997a) tackles the question of writing poetry not only from her body, but also from her blackness, exploring the possibility that the complexion of her words “or the lack of it” will have real consequences. I want to use Lorde’s question, which remains unanswered, to refer back to “Now that I Am Forever with Child,” a poem that does not posit race as a category of difference, rather celebrates the very personal experience of becoming a mother. But for Lorde poetry *does* have color, as it has sexuality and gender consciousness. In the poem “Coal” (1997b), Lorde explicitly argues for a poetry growing out of blackness, linking her identity to her blackness: “I is the total black/being spoken/from the earth's inside” and her blackness to her poetry: “I am Black/ because I come from the earth's inside/take my word for jewel/ in the open light.” I want to argue that Lorde re-writes in “Bloodbirth” the almost ideal experience of giving birth constructed in “Now that I Am Forever with Child” because of her sharp awareness of her multiple identities. For Lorde, an account of becoming a mother, or the construction of a birthing self, that is not gendered, raced or sexed, that does not call for political change, needs to be re-imagined in a social and symbolic context. At the same time however, the angry, chaotic, social and symbolic construction of “Bloodbirth” needs to be tempered by the personal, loving intimacy of “Now that I Am Forever with Child.”

The last lines of “Bloodbirth” return to the births of self—“the true face of me”—babies—“my children your children their children”—and poetry—“our conjugating business:”

and from what direction
will the opening be made
to show the true face of me
lying exposed and together
my children your children their children
bent on our conjugating business.

The poem thus closes with a question that is enmeshed in identity, relational-

ity and poetry. Lorde is asking how, or “from what direction” the “true face of me,” or her self, constituted of multiple selves, will emerge in her poetry and experience. What is sure is that this “true face of me” is not an isolated self, but a social self “lying exposed and *together*.” Moreover, it is a self that is responsible for a future generation, for the material result of giving birth. Her vision is almost utopian, with the progeny of self and other coming together. But this utopia is undermined by the double meaning of “lying;” by placing this word adjacent to and juxtaposed to the “true face of me” she suggests that there is no one essential “true” stable self, but continuously evolving multiple selves.

The union or “conjugation” of “my children your children their children,” occurs through language, through writing poetry, through “*our* conjugating business.” Indeed, the play on “conjugating,” with its triple meaning of reproductive union, coming together and grammatical play of words or verbs, functions to promote a poetry that, rather than “my own business minding,” focuses on the business of using words as a tool for social change. By “lying exposed and *together*,” by seeing ourselves in each other, the “true face of me,” not essential and constant, but multiple and ever-changing, will emerge in poetry. Once again, we almost forget that Lorde is also depicting the experience of giving birth. In causing us forget this, Lorde breaks down the binaries of procreation and creation completely, rendering the body as source of both. Moreover Lorde subtly embeds the body in social, symbolic questions of identity, race, creativity and feminism.

Lorde’s suggestive use of language in this poem illustrates Mae Gwendolyn Henderson’s (1998) characterization of black women’s writing as “speaking in tongues.” Drawing on Bakhtin’s theories of discourse, Henderson locates in this writing both “glossolalia” and “heteroglossia.” Glossolalia refers to the ability to “utter the mysteries of the spirit” (353) in an inspired mode of intimate communication, while heteroglossia refers to “polyphony, multivocality, and plurality of voices” (353). According to Henderson, since African-American women “speak from a multiple and complex social, historical and cultural positionality” (351), their speech takes on an “interlocutory, or dialogic character, reflecting not only a relationship with the “other(s),” but an internal dialogue with the plural aspects of self that constitute the matrix of black female subjectivity” (349).

Returning to “Now that I Am Forever with Child” I want to suggest that although these two poems in a sense undo each other, and thus paradoxically together offer us a more complex rendering of the experience of birth, they also have at their root the same vision of the possibility of becoming a self through a recognition of, or skewed identification with, the other. In “Now that I Am Forever with Child” the insistence on otherness is exceptional since Lorde’s sources of otherness (black, woman, lesbian, feminist) are so numerous, one might not expect her respect for difference in her child, who is actually her same. Henderson’s (1998) conscription of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s “I-Thou” relationship to discuss black women writers is useful for conceptualizing this

vision of the “other.” For Gadamer “the important thing is to experience the ‘Thou’ truly as a ‘Thou,’ that is, not to overlook (the other’s) claim and to listen to what [s/he] has to say to us” (cited in Henderson, 1998: 345). In turn, the understanding of the “Thou” becomes “a form of self-relatedness” (Henderson, 1998: 346) Lorde’s self in “Now that I Am Forever with Child,” by separating from the other—“I *thought* it was my heart”—recognizes the baby’s otherness, its “you-ness,” as being the center or “one thread” of her birth experience. But this recognition valorizes her self, the “I,” for she has brought the other into being. This identification is “skewed” or “a *form* of self-relatedness” in that, although she will see herself in her baby in the most material way—in her hands, her hair and her teeth—the emphasis on the otherness, the “you” flowing through or out of other selves, demands the recognition of difference.

As discussed, in “Bloodbirth” the “true face of me,” the “I,” emerges by a “conjugation” with and recognition of the other. The self may be social, bent on “our conjugating business,” but it can become this way only by somehow seeing herself refracted in “my children your children their children.” Henderson’s (1998) theory seems almost exactly to describe the final stanza of Lorde’s poem, and the dynamic specific to the black woman poet’s recognition of the other:

One discovers in these writers a kind of internal dialogue reflecting an *intrasubjective* engagement with the *intersubjective* aspects of self, a dialectic neither repressing difference nor, for that matter, privileging identity, but rather expressing engagement with the social aspects of self (“the other[s] in ourselves”). It is this subjective plurality ... that, finally, allows the black woman to become an expressive site for a dialectics/ dialogics of identity and difference. (349)

Lorde’s construction and re-imagining of the pregnant and birthing self, whether “private” as in “Now that I Am Forever with Child” or “public” as in “Bloodbirth,” is related to her construction of, and skewed identification with, an other.

Sagri Dhairyam (1992) suggests that the earth’s “total black ... inside” is also “a feminized trope for the womb, both receptive and violated, that is at the center of the poetic act of extracting meaning” (233).

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Mothering, Mending Metal and My Son

A Response to the Work of Amira de la Garza

This piece speaks to the ways mothering and scholarship can intertwine when least expected, particularly when race, class, and gender are formulating epistemological factors. Amidst a mothering turning point in my life, when my oldest child was violently attacked in a parking lot at his school, I questioned not only my place as his mother, but because of the effects of the attack, my place in academia as well. My identity as a mother was in flux throughout this crisis—in terms of age and race amidst white doctors and police, and in terms of my ability to be both a mother and a scholar within the rubric of “acceptable” scholarship in academia—I was not trusted in the circle of racist investigation surrounding my sons attack, and I was not believed capable within the circle of chairs in a graduate classroom—specifically because I was unable to attend an event required of the course. More important than either of these, I doubted my ability in both arenas, and came out feeling sure of myself in both. The lessons learned from this experience resonate in the connection between the scholarship of Amira de la Garza, which I was immersed in at the time, and the realizations of my status around and beliefs about mothering a child of colour.

This piece was written during a tumultuous time in my life; a time my dual function as mother and scholar collided in a most unexpected and frightening way. Often my work resonates with my daily life circumstance; usually I plan it that way. This time, however, was unplanned. What I thought would be a weekend retreat—a requirement by a graduate class on critical ethnography—became a moment of introspection on mothering, race, class, and ethnographic methodological reflection far from the physical locale of the retreat. I was unable to be there in body, though through my extensive preparation for the event, I was unable to disconnect in mind, even as circumstances overwhelmed me.

What was supposed to be a physical leaving behind of mothering in order to perform as a scholar ended up being a very physical assertion (for myself and my son) that my mothering can not be left behind, literally or metaphorically. Thus, this piece emerged amidst personal turmoil and within the context of readings I was immersed in, specifically “The Four Seasons of Ethnography” (2000) and “Ethnography as Spiritual Practice” (2003b), both by Amira de la Garza.

I use narrative to argue that mothering, specifically that between a mother and her son of colour, is a contested site of difference and continual negotiation; I draw from Amira de la Garza to name how such a site of contention is also a point of discovery in which difference and negotiation are communal sites of interrogation. In this case, it is my experience of being read as a mother of a non-white son by hospital personnel and police that becomes text to be spiritually interpreted and critically framed. As such, my narrative, interspersed with the theoretic strands in Amira de la Garza’s critical ethnography, speaks to larger issues of cultural acceptance of motherhood when race, gender, and class intervene. To be specific, I argue that in this story my motherhood was in question from the moment I appeared with my son and our race, class, and age difference could be read. At the same time, while motherhood called me to my son’s hospital bed, my place as a scholar came in to question. That is, the perception that I refused to attend an expensive retreat as part of doctoral study coupled with my desire to make my scholarship about personal issues marked me as an outsider. My dual status as mother and scholar was not accepted. This was something I had long felt in the academic hallway, yet never before was it so visible to everyone else.

I must make a note here about style. Narrative reminds of the importance of our stories and the collective responsibility encouraged by sharing those stories. I do not discount the fact that, for me, the narrative I write here is both healing and rebellion. I refuse to separate my work from my experience. They are intertwined, and this co-existence can and often does produce theory—vital to the existing literature on motherhood and mothering. Thus, the reader has a responsibility here to negotiate the presence of language of varying tone and content. Doing so opens the realm of inclusion to mothers and scholars of varying experience—theory as a result of practice.

Getting the story straight

I envision a fight I did not see. Twenty seven minutes of a brown boy/man¹ being held, punched, kicked, yelled at, laughed at, hit harder, snatched from rough rage too late and yet in perfect time by friends pulling up in a white van of safety and ignorance; much like the white man. I want to call it a beating, an attack, an ass kicking. But the man/boy and his allegiance to hegemonic masculinity does not allow it. I know this because the first time I called it such, he groaned from his hospital bed, “you make it sound like I didn’t do anything to protect myself, moommm.” I have not said it again. Out loud. I can not

control my thinking it. I fear the things I think. Perhaps my thoughts are not so powerful in that they are only internal to my own soul. I doubt this logic, knowing, as Amira de la Garza (2003b) writes in “Ethnography as Spiritual Practice” that “the power to name is the power to call into being” (494). Are my thoughts making the boy/man weak? Have I set him up? What assumptions am I taking for granted in this internal dialogue of mine? Am I giving “the man” too much power? Or does he really have it already? What about the boy/man who must survive in this society as a man/boy of colour ... where does this position him? And me as his mother guide?

One of the first questions I was asked by my family at the hospital was about race. Was it white boys who hurt him? Was it because he is brown?²² How to respond. No. I was strangely defensive, not wanting to answer the question, not because I wanted to defend the white man, though I may still have remnants of that strong conditioning, but because I did not want to admit that it was the hands of our people. It was brown hands, brown smiles, golden blood flowing hearts encompassed in brown souls- so much the deeper when couched in the definition from de la Garza (2003b) “that which sees the nature of our existence and experience as a whole” (497), baggy pants, Nike sweatshop cool Cortez shoes, skull caps covering smoothed back black locks, and Allen Iverson wannabe a basketball star shirts, holding in the rage over ownership, property, territory.

So, the story *I am told* goes that it was over a girl at a club weeks back, payback for unfinished business. The story that *I am told* goes that the attacker, or, the hitter, was just scared my man/boy was going to hurt him, so he hit first. The story that *I am told* goes that they did not mean to hold him down. The story *I believe*—and that thus in its realness determines all I see (de la Garza, 2003a: 77)—goes that the parents are sad, all of us, sharing different sides of the same experience. The story *I hope* goes that the whole thing is over. The story still in my head says not hardly. So, back to the question, was it the white man? Was it over race? Ultimately, at the root, I say yes. How could it not be so when the colonization of the white man has made the violence between brown brothers that which separates them from each other, from a common vision, goal, future of rebellion? Am I to be comforted by de la Garza’s assurance that “simple rebellion ... often occurs in the very midst of the oppression?” (2003a: 81) Do the brown boy/men see that they are being used as pawns in their own oppression? Do I see my part?²³ The girl, if there was one, was just a symptom. What does this say about her? About gender, about the dynamics of the brown boy/men and the creamy egg shell skin of the passing for white brown immigrant Iowa woman/girl in question?

I need to know more. There is, as de la Garza quotes Jacqueline Martinez in “An Ethics for Postcolonial Ethnography” (2003a) a “knowing unknown” a phenomenological stance within which one is aware there is a reality associated with one’s existence other than that which was received” (81). Surrender does not come easily here, and I am not yet able to pray for its arrival. I am scared

to know more, I am sorrowful, and angry, and exhausted. And, when I read the words, “even forces experienced as oppositional and destructive or dominating reflect something of the interdependent cyclical world in which we live” (de la Garza, 2000: 637) I find myself defensive again, asking what role my boy/man played(s), what roles I have orchestrated. My urge to control takes over and I have to rein it in, begging myself to relinquish, let go, live real and embrace-full of the journey. I want to engage with “*meditation, reflection, and introspection*” (2003b: 504, italics in original) and I am not yet able to honor the power of the words and images I replay in my mind (de la Garza, 2003b: 504), maybe I am not being honest, but I may just not be willing.

I am trying to put together a reality of culture and community that connects me to my boy/man as the man/boy he sees himself. I am trying to construct an image that reflects the brown hands of this violent act as hands interlocked, joined through oppression, experience, and able to forego the politics of the fight and just re-unite with each other despite their white colonialist manipulated divide and across their differences. These realities I desire do challenge the norms that are inherent in the day to day life of the white high school these brown bodies inhabit daily, but I am guilty of taking something for granted here, a privilege to see past it all perhaps, or a need on their part to do things differently. I am projecting, from within spirituality and desire, yes, but no doubt from a space of “ignorant awareness” (2003b: 501) as de la Garza describes it: How do I cross over? Am I the one who should be doing this work at all? I must remember that “... experience is part of the whole process” (2000: 633).

The first question I was asked at the hospital wasn't really in the form of one. It was an accusing stare, a shameful nod questioning my presence. “Are you the mother?” “The mother?” If you mean of the man/boy, yes, I am his mother. Take me to him please. The deceptively young pale skin of the sandy-haired resident shuddered at the sight of us together, and he asked again, after he was already told, “Are you the mother?” Yes, I reply, do you need verification of some sort? I couldn't focus at the time on the question. After, hours later, as I wait in the small hot room where families pray while their loved ones are cut open, sewed up, invaded with metal plates and pieces of foreign wire, bone, and thread, the questions reappeared. Was it colour? Was it age? Both?⁴

Questioning the answers

The images keep coming back, invading my dreams, begging me to run them through over and over. What if there had been a gun? The burn, the feel of the gravel under his writhing body on the cement parking lot at the local high school. I wander through the hospital seeing the blood splatter, the tears that scream, later I realize coming from me, the phone calls, the priest, pastor, healer, witch, the telling, the wailing, the death, the funeral, the pain so deep, so sharp in my chest, the crumbling of my soul along with the man/boy with the boy/man spirit still in me. I awake in a sweat, not the kind of too hot sum-

mer nights or long rich love making, the kind of stomach wrenching bowel pain and fear gripping me from within. I awake and glance around the plastic white hospital room, focus in on his breathing, the boy so quickly becoming a man, who is healing, is safe, is nowhere close to death.

Amira de la Garza (2000) writes of the four seasons of ethnography based on spirituality and spherical processes. She states “new ideas are only new in that they revisit where we have already been.” De la Garza continues, “History and tradition are fundamental to our current understanding” (628). From this spiritual base I can begin to see that the white colonialist remains ultimately responsible for the hatred between brown boys/men in the high school parking lot of my son’s injuries. And yet, I must take this slowly and remain confident but open in my accusations. I must be able to take them tentatively, Amira de la Garza cautions. I must be able to take the time to envision the bigger picture, that which is always changing, enlarging to encompass us all in the circle of seasons de la Garza acclimates me to. As I come to see the whole of the imagery, I can situate my own responsibility within it, investigate my own positionality and possibly, that of my man/boy son.

All of this is within my own circle of seasons,⁵ of motherhood, of race awareness, of feminism, of mental stability, of personal soul searching, of myself. There are, in fact, many seasons functioning at once within my life, coexisting at different stages, some in preparation as with the spring of ethnographic work, others in autumn and note taking reflection and still others are in coming to the page, to the public, to the inked surfaces of my life as it is today. And still, it is all tentative. I write this, and as I do, I question it, relying on the feelings I experience as I read de la Garza’s (2000) resonating lyrics, attempting to remain aware that “all experience is part of the whole process” (633). More than that, this fear I have at the tentativeness of it all, the desire that I reach some permanent shining goal, is a reminder that when I choose to slow down and look more closely, I can see that as de la Garza (2000) writes, “respect is about looking at something again, getting to really know it. Not rushing” (638). This is not only valuable in the “field” I immerse myself in as a scholar, it is vital to my life as a whole, but in my mothering in particular. It is easy to say I respect my son, that I trust him, that I am proud of what I have taught him. It is much harder to admit questioning his motives, to discuss my fears and personal prejudice towards his choices, his friends, the choices he made that led to his physical destruction.

According to de la Garza, I am in the spring of personal investigation, struggling to acknowledge and take apart my biases and interrogate the multiplicity of my perspectives, those I trot out to make my presence in the classroom I fear I do not fit in more readily negotiable, and those I am still finding my way too, or do not yet know at all. Thus, I am continuously asking myself, what am I doing, why, for what long-term goal? In many ways, I am at crisis, on multiple levels, as a scholar, as a mother to a son considered Black, as a woman of colour, as a fat white body, as a human.

However, though I am in some form (perhaps constantly) in one of my springs, I am straddling a summer, a time of “intense realizations” according to de la Garza (2000: 642). I struggle toward them, trying to be present in myself at all times, running from the visions, hiding behind trees as I simultaneously peek from between the branches trying to focus on the dance I am in rather than the fear camouflaging itself as a thirst for something else (de la Garza, 2000: 642). This crisis state is a learning experience that tests my courage, my ability to “stay” as de la Garza insists is so imperative to learning to transcend. De la Garza’s theoretic strands help me to name the transformative turn I must take as a scholar, mother, and storyteller. Such transformation leads to understanding, in the pre-ethnographic spring of my soul-self and within the larger context of ethnographic fieldwork over multiple seasons. For sure, I am transforming as a mother, losing my boy as he becomes a man—losing the mothering self I had grown so used to as I must change if I want to keep him close.⁶

I am not yet entering my fall, the autumn of my thinking it all through, my time to harvest. At least not with motherhood, race, or scholarship. However, I question this boundary I draw. I wonder what de la Garza would say to my thinking that one can be going through exploration and realization at the same time. For example, as I continue to explore my racial positionality, as I get scared, and sad, and at times angry at my perceived whiteness, at my only emotional brown-ness, at the lack of my physical being, de la Garza (2000) tells me my faults are valuable, leading toward “honest reflection” when embraced instead of thought of as “unwelcome intrusions” (631). I continue to explore my physicality, just as I have come to the realization, the certainty that I am a brown-souled woman. But, is this all still tentative? Is it dependent on my proximity to my son? Is it all twirling round and round, functioning at the same time in spite of or because of each other? Is balance this shaky? (de la Garza, 2000: 634) How do I know when my weight is equally distributed? What are those balancing scales called?

Choices abound daily, every moment of every day. Which shirt I pull over my cold still tired shoulders, how much of the butter I love that hurts my body to drag across the stiff sourdough that I pretend is “close” to San Francisco’s Colombo, whether the coffee I want so badly is okay if this month’s fertility meds really worked and the baby I dream of is on the way, which country road to take into the town I work in that is ambitiously named a city, what to teach, how to talk, what to disclose about the real me today. Each of these choices has ramifications, consequences, real results. Some are more intense than others but all are related to the next. With my boy/man just out of the hospital, police still questioning, racism ever apparent in the small town station with its wanted pictures containing only dark faces, I chose not to attend the Amira de la Garza retreat as I was required to.

This choice was not easy. Deciding to stay with my son meant that I would have to produce a scholarly piece that would take the place of my being with

the other graduate students. I had to prove academic membership in absentia. Part of this requirement was to send the finished product to Amira de la Garza and answer this list of questions:

What are the areas of my life that are the most “me?”

Writing alone what I want, laying in Sean’s arms, hugging Seanna (does it count as me when other people are involved?), my home-life when no one is home but me, what my dogs see when they are the only ones around. Does sitting in memories of teenage motherhood holding my beautiful brown baby count? Have I avoided this question? It is harder than I thought to decide, to decipher when and if there is a “most me” area.

What questions make me “cringe” when people ask me about myself?

What is my ethnicity, what do I want to do when I finish graduate school, have I tried xxx diet, do I like Iowa. Did I *want* my teenage pregnancy? Would I do it again?

What people “trigger” me or make me feel excessively or obsessively negative OR positive about them?

This is a hard one. At least it is today. I often find myself feeling betrayed because I have attached too soon or gotten too close. I am told orphans do this, and I am a ward of the court foster kid from way back. So, often those people who make me feel very positive about them are the same ones who make me feel quite negative about them. I even monitor to this trait within my mothering of my children. There is something major to be learned here about myself, my boundaries, and my family/friend choices but I feel sad and defensive, stubborn even as I write this now. I feel hurt and alone by my own neediness. Pushing this aside, I am often triggered by white men, white women, well, white people in general, my own racism that I am working to face, most often as I look in the mirror. I am triggered by the news and the overwhelming negativity fueled by flashing dark faces.

Do I prefer spring, summer, fall, or winter?

What patterns in my life would tell me this? I hate summer. Really. I hate to be hot, I actually may dislike the sun when it blinds me with its brightness. So, by some law of opposites, I love the winter. The caterpillar that is a totem to me came to me the first time in a freezing Chicago snow. I especially love the winter here with its cold wind and mushy white roads. I love the squeals of sledding that still erupt in the snow from a boy too soon turned man. It is the only time I love the colour white. I write better in the winter, I finish things in winter (degrees, destructive behavior, bad relationships), and I feel better physically in the winter. Fall is nice with its rain and light blowing of coloured leaves. I especially like fall in northern California. I sit a lot in fall, taking things in, acclimating myself. Spring brings my birthday, Ostara, or the spring equinox, and the blooming of the daffodils, the flowers etched along

my breasts next to my son's name. I feel clean in the spring, renewed yet sad to see the winter go, much like the seasons of motherhood as a teenager becomes adult—it is so clean and fresh outside but sometimes I just miss curling up in the dark cold house with my all too familiar blanket that smells of years of his little boy funk.

How much choice do I feel I have had in telling my life story?

Until recently, very little. My story has been told in the pages of court documents, hospital records, psychiatrist journals since I was 5 years old. I have been discussed in essence through welfare reform, debates about what is good mothering on *NPR*, *CNN*, and countless *Time* covers, and the looks when I am found out as a scholar—how could *this* woman be a Ph.D.? I have recently reclaimed this and struggled through the shame of it all, deciding that the story, my story, from my perspective at this point in time is valuable, needed, and necessary for moving forward. I have set about telling it within my work, both scholarly and otherwise, another sometimes sticky endeavor. Do I consider myself the author of my life? Sometimes, depending on how I let myself be affected by negativity, betrayal (real or imagined), my own fear and tentativeness (which until reading Amira's work I have always categorized as a negative thing).

As I answered each question, I imagined the retreat, driving there, relaxing in the backseat of some car with no responsibility except for myself for two days, journaling as a group of similarly committed people in search of spiritual ethnography, enjoying the light of a Chicago night and laughing over wine with friends, old and new. I tend to romanticize things quite easily, and though I knew this was again probably the case, I fantasized anyway, up until the fight. Then, everything was tested. I knew when I heard the details of the surgery and weeks to come that I would not be leaving my home-turf for at least two months, but I quickly pushed it aside, avoided telling friends, co-workers, myself really. It somehow made the whole thing look worse to the outsider looking in that I kept my commitment to read my work at the local independent bookstore. Of course, I needed that break and it was do-able, being 15 minutes from home. I rationalized that I could not go to Chicago because my boy/man had his first jaw tightening the Friday I would be at the retreat, but in actuality, I could have arranged it differently. I could have scheduled it for Monday, or imparted to my partner the importance of his taking off work to make sure all went well and so on. I didn't, choosing to maintain control, and continue functioning on mother-watch, though it still feels little like a choice.

Sometimes the seasons have no end

Spring and motherhood, birth, rebirth, nurturing, pulling closer, letting go, planning, painting, Partnership, autumn is finally securely here, after 19 years of hell, heartbreak and intense love and pain. Soul mates finally accepting each

other for who we are, not the baggage we carry with us from childhood, parents, lovers, mistakes, mistakes, mistakes. Summer heat warns me to watch my back for the sun can burn my too pale skin in an instant—dissertation formulation, research, required writing in a tone others decide is or is not “scholarly.” Personal writing, coming to fruition as a woman secure in her-self for now, the sign of a warm blanket of snow holding me tight all through the winter? I decide more and more which way to go in all these areas every moment of every day. My motherhood is imbedded in every decision.

Time to write this all down ended too fast and I rushed today, back and forth to my computer, in between an appointment for my boy/man’s wire tightening at the hospital where he asked questions, and sat up straight, very much like a man still in a boy’s body only in my mind and appointments of my own. As I drove him back to my home, the house he had not lived at for months before the attack, choosing the rooms of friends and a girl over his family, I felt sad at the thought that he is getting better and would surely leave soon, this time, he says, for his aunts in California.

I turned to the task at hand momentarily at least, glancing out the window and into the wind as it drifted what is most likely the last of this winter’s snow across my yard, I instantly wondered about my own seasons, what was beginning again, and what was coming to a close? What had I learned from Amira de la Garza that I could have never learned had I made the trip to Chicago in person? I learned first hand “the possibility of punishment for one’s personal involvement with one’s research” (2003a: 79). I came to this assessment of my current life as this very punishment, the price for responsibility to one life and neglect of another. The cost for my life being my research on so many intricate levels. Writing it has proven to be something else. Not some fairytale ending (or beginning) that is stirred by the words themselves—rather, the *doing* of the work, the realization that I am in a circular motion, working toward a more rounded self. This finally dawned on me in a more believable way as I thought about the readings, contemplated the writing and drove through the winter mix of snow and hope toward dinner with an academic friend.

I found myself explaining to my colleague that I was reading this work about the four seasons of ethnography and had she ever thought that our lives were really very much the same? She looked at me kind of strange, nodded as though she knew of what I spoke, and moved on to asking how my son’s treatments were going (was this work and my son even connected for her? Without her knowing perhaps?). I knew that she would have to see to believe, that she was what de la Garza calls “too familiar” (2003a: 77) with the language and I smiled, glancing again into the winter of my mind, snow blowing by to confuse me and disorient my own sense of belonging. I sighed and silently repeated to myself one of my favorite lines from de la Garza’s “An Ethics for Postcolonial Ethnography,” where Amira de la Garza (2003a) asserts, “voice is the clear channeling of honest mindful experience” (83).

And yet, directions, like weather, shift

Above, narrative emerges as a tool not only for further self-reflection, but as a means to take apart theory of spirituality, experience, and contested identities; in this case mothering, race, and academia. My story shows how race, age, class, and motherhood are all read within norms both inside and outside of the academy. And when these are read on my body as a teen mother of a non-white son, I am questioned. Academia, though seemingly progressive in many instances, is not immune to the questioning of women with children. Honest and painful, my truth coupled with de la Garza's theory succeeds in pushing me to stronger assertions about race and motherhood for sure.

As I said in the introduction, I have long felt the uneasiness of my mutual identities as mother and scholar. However, it was not until this palpable clashing of those two worlds that I recognized what the conflict really meant—that I had to make choices. And those choices have ramifications. Choosing to stay with my son did not mean I was no longer a scholar, it meant that I was performing a balancing act that opened me up to questioning. Simultaneously, I became more entranced with my work, and all that was left to talk about in terms of race, class, and motherhood specifically. This was the moment when that long held tension felt so clear and visible—to everyone exposed to it.

Yet, I feel the tug of acceptance. What if my “story” is not deemed influential in the theoretical realm I occupy at my institution? What if the connections I am making do not seem to traverse the boundaries of my life? On the other hand, what if, as I assert with the above work, narratives of experience coupled with theory produce new interventions into current frameworks within race and gender scholarship in particular; urging us to question our place in the system of politic laden academia that can often still present mothering in prescribed troupes and conflated imagery? Deemed experimental but highly influential in tone and content, narrative induced theory has the means to change the current literature, if given the opportunity.

Special thanks to Monica Brasile, Aimee Mapes, and Kats Mendoza for their support and guidance—you are the best posse a mama scholar could have.

I shift between boy/man and man/boy at different points throughout here as a signifier of both my reluctance to see my son as a man when he is still my little boy in memory and as a point of clarification in life as a mother and son; he sees himself as a man, he acts sometimes as a boy, he was hit as a man, hurts like a boy and etc.... These words are also intricately connected to race, the “man” often white, who controls much amidst this story, the police, doctors, and so on. “Boy” is a term problematic in its use—rooted in slavery in the United States and utilized as a degrading term to signify lower status in terms of race and masculinity. I reclaim “boy” for my own use here—as a tool in my mind reminding me of his younger carefree days, those that changed

forever with this violent experience.

²My son is described as brown, black, and “of colour” in this piece. A reader asked me recently why the shift, and didn’t I think I needed to stick with one descriptor—was he brown or black? Was he African American or Latino? My son and I discussed this as we read the piece together. He asked that the ambiguity remain for several reasons. One, he is more often than not misread. Two, he resides within a personal community that sees the issues of Latino and African American men as intertwined (not the same, but connected) in such a way that he is resistant to easy descriptive separation. And three, as the events unfolded through this event, he was treated differently based on the moment-by-moment racial ideologies of the people involved. Thus, he asked that the tension between the racial descriptors in this writing remain, as much for the reader to question their need to know specifics as for his own questioning of self.

³As a mother of a child of colour, I am consistently in flux, questioning my own positionality as a woman with white skin who feels such an allegiance with and connection to brown and black tones, I am called trans-racial jokingly by friends who know my story, a woman of colour trapped in a white body who mothers in a distinctly non-white manner. This is all highly controversial and can’t be adequately addressed in this piece. Instead I leave the questioning of such identities and intersections to the reader—I only ask that judgment be suspended long enough to truly investigate the possibilities outside of our racial comfort zones.

⁴As a young mother, I am often questioned about my connection to my oldest son in particular. As he ages, we are thought to be dating, or looked at with strange curiousness in many situations. Add in the racial ambiguity of my sons look and the ways whiteness is inscribed and questioned on my body and attitude and discomfort ensues for those feeling a need to know. Nevertheless, usually I am not directly questioned (verbally at least)—the accusatory tone (was I lying; was I a girlfriend trying to stay in the unit?) made the questioning all the more invasive and upon reflection, stirred my anger.

⁵I embark in this section on connection making between my existence and nature—a theme prevalent in Amira de la Garza’s work and one that I found running constantly through my mind while in vigil at the hospital. It was as though the scholarship I had been reading in preparation for the missed retreat was actually there for me in anticipation of something larger, this crisis in my mothering life. I am still unable to talk of de la Garza’s work without talking of the beating—and I rarely mention the attack without qualifying it with theories I took from my readings of the time—mothering in theory and practice taken to new levels.

⁶Again, I find it hard to separate my work on motherhood, race, and poverty from the mothering I experience with my son. Just as I must sometimes change my position or negotiate contested terrain as a scholar, I find myself at a crossroads where I must let my son go if I want to remain in a place of openness

with him. Should I hold on to antiquated mothering models of his childhood, I will lose his trust. He will not share with a mother who is resistant, judging him, or condemning his choices. Easier said than done on my part—just as with the embracing of new ideas when it means imbedded knowledge must be reconfigured.

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Mulatta Mama Performing Passing and Mimicking Minstrelsy in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

Mark Twain's novel Pudd'nhead Wilson relates the freedom stories of three racially ambiguous people: the slave Roxy, her son Chambers, and the master's son Tom. The three find themselves searching for truth and freedom in complex webs of deceit. This paper considers how acts of racial passing and blackface minstrelsy facilitate entry into and enhance enjoyment of the benefits of white American citizenship and how motherhood creates the ability and opportunity to pursue that citizenship.

According to many scholars, white men dominate blackface minstrel performance. Yet Twain, knowledgeable of blackface customs, chooses to have the slave woman Roxy perform as a white male in blackface. Instead of the cross-dressed wench conceit being played by a white male performer, Twain inscribes white maleness (the pinnacle of U.S. freedom) in blackface on a female enslaved body that, while legally black, appears white and could easily pass into white society. This confusion of custom, race, and gender highlights blackface minstrelsy and racial passing as means for Roxy to appropriate the civil rights afforded to full U.S. citizens.

Roxy performs racial passing and blackface minstrelsy in her quest for freedom and a good American life for herself and her son, but Roxy does not seek freedom or manipulate race before she becomes a mother. Being a mother changes women's public as well as private lives. I argue that Roxy's desire and ability to employ race in order to garner freedom and access the benefits of American citizenship for herself and her son stem from being a mother.

Above all else, most mothers seek to protect their children. But as property, slave mothers lack the power and authority to provide basic necessities for themselves and their children, because they are not American citizens, but rather American chattel. Mothers, however, regardless of station or servitude, prove resourceful and find strength in motherhood because "motherhood provides

an introductory experience of having real power in the world” (Ellison, 2005: 106). And if motherhood is “powerful assertiveness training” that produces a willingness in mothers to “stand up against society and authority,” then motherhood must prepare and impel some slave women to fight the institution that hinders them (Ellison, 2005: 112, 113). Motherhood gives slave women the gumption to flout societal norms and seek freedom. In freedom lies the power and authority to protect self and children. The most effective way in the U.S. to obtain public political liberty is to be white and male. White supremacy and patriarchy define U.S. citizenship, so Roxy, a mulatta slave mother in Mark Twain’s novel *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1959 [1894]), becomes a white man to find freedom. Roxy easily could pass as a white woman, and does to an extent, but to actualize her freedom, Roxy dons a blackface minstrel disguise. I argue that Roxy, although she employs racial passing to help affect freedom, uses blackface minstrelsy as a means of appropriating white maleness and its inherent liberties granted through patriarchy and white supremacy. I further argue that Roxy’s desire and ability to manipulate race in order to garner freedom and access the benefits of American citizenship for herself and her son stem from being a mother.

Mark Twain and motherhood

Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, although published in the 1890s takes place during the early 1850s in a small slaveholding Missouri town, slightly south of St. Louis. It relates the freedom stories of three racially ambiguous people: the slave Roxy, her son Chambers, and the master’s son Tom. Roxy, who is only one-sixteenth black, looks like a white woman. Her son Chambers, a mere one-thirty-second black, also appears white. Tom, as the master’s son, stands as the only “real” white person of the trio. Chambers and Tom share the same birthday, and Roxy, who rears them both, is the only person who can tell the two apart. Early in the novel, Roxy switches Chambers and Tom in the crib, thus bestowing freedom on her son. She never reveals their true identities. (From this point forward, I will follow Twain’s example and call the slave-born Chambers, Tom; and the freeborn Tom, Chambers.) When Tom’s father dies, he frees Roxy, who becomes a chambermaid on a steamer, and Tom and Chambers go to live with Tom’s uncle. Tom later sells Roxy back into slavery, and she escapes from an Arkansas plantation to find freedom.

Twain’s novel reveals he understands the potential power embedded in motherhood. Carolyn Porter (1990) describes *Pudd’nhead Wilson* as the “scene of conflict between a repressive paternal plot and a subversive maternal one” (125). Porter asserts that the “matrilineal rule of descent reinscribed on the mulatto mother that makes Roxana such a powerful weapon in Twain’s arsenal” pokes holes in white patriarchy (135). Children follow the slave status of their mothers, even if their fathers are white and free. Following matrilineal descent provides more slaves for slaveholders, but it also grants slave mothers the power to obliterate status inherited from fathers, even white ones (Porter, 1990: 131).

Myra Jehlen (1990) similarly argues that the congruency between Roxy's statuses as mother and black woman allow Twain to endow her with a degree of transcendence, that is the individual selfhood afforded to white males and their social ability to create themselves (114). For Jehlen, this transcendence most aggressively asserts itself when Roxy holds nature and race in "abeyance" and switches the babies (117). By switching the boys, she grants her son white male selfhood. Conceiving the idea of swapping the children requires a "strong" will and an "acute" and "calculating mind" (Porter, 1990: 125). Twain demonstrates through Roxy the power inherent in motherhood. Porter (1990) notes how he marks the "slave mother at once antebellum America's most tragic victim and potentially one of its most powerful subversive agents" (123).

Porter (1990) and Jehlen (1990) both acknowledge the power embedded in motherhood as experienced by the slave Roxy. To extend their arguments, I suggest motherhood itself as the wellspring of will, courage, intelligence, and creativity that Roxy possess and uses in garnering freedom for her son and herself. Motherhood enables Roxy to conceive of freedom and emboldens her to create and act out subversive race and gender roles, through racial passing and blackface minstrelsy, in her effort to fight patriarchy and white supremacy to enact that liberty.

Privilege, citizenship, and race

The social structures under question stem from the predominance of U.S. white supremacy, defined as the "radical inequality" between whites and nonwhites in every aspect of social life (Gordon, 2004: 174). White supremacy offers a standard of privileges that only certain humans can possess, simply by the accident of their birth (Gordon, 2004: 175-76). The problem of privilege is that it grants things like safety, food, and shelter—all things that should not be privileges but rather ought to stand as basic human rights. So white supremacy then, places humanity in the possession of whites alone (Gordon, 2004: 175, 178). Accordingly in the world of Twain's novel, Roxy does not enjoy the guarantee of these human rights. So in order to make a bid for these rights, these basic American freedoms, Twain has his Roxy employ, with varying degrees of success, racial passing and blackface minstrelsy. Because Roxy is fifteen-sixteenths white, she appears to be a white woman, but because she is only one-sixteenth black, Roxy is legally a slave. Roxy's legal status as white-skinned slave, with her potential for passing as free and passing freely into white society, challenges white supremacy and ideas of American citizenship.

Understanding *citizenship* as "taking responsibility for public life," slaves are not American citizens (Buker, 1999: 8). And before becoming a mother Roxy ostensibly does not attempt to control her public life. It is only after having her son that Roxy begins to think about participating in the public realm. Motherhood emboldens Roxy and equips her with "ways that help her cope more efficiently with the outside world" (Ellison, 2005: 76). One way that mothers protect their children is by tending, which at times means fading into the

scenery (Ellison, 2005: 94). Furthermore, slave mothers' need to protect their children often resulted in means of tending that became "exceedingly harsh or enterprising," which often created "emotional distance" between mothers and their children (Giddings, 1984: 44). For Roxy, tending to her son means helping him to disappear into the white American landscape. Her enterprising method, exchanging one baby for another, results in creating emotional distance between Tom and Roxy, but it also brings each of them closer to the ideals of liberty found in full American citizenship. Eloise A. Buker (1999) defines *citizenship* as the act of choosing how to perform subjectivity (157). So Roxy performs her first act as an American citizen when she decides to reinvent her son's subjectivity and switches Tom and Chambers. In so doing, Roxy opts to turn her biological son's public persona into that of a free white male with access to all of the benefits that American citizenship can offer. She introduces him to the life of privilege accessible through white supremacy. And in her burgeoning citizenship, Roxy yearns for the same privileges as her son.

Roxy as racial passer

Motherhood enables women to "become more flexible and resourceful, less fearful, and more 'dominant'—meaning focused and confident—in other realms of their lives" (Ellison, 2005: 108). In other words, motherhood helps women develop and implement strategies that yield positive outcomes in their lives. After her re-enslavement, Roxy escapes from an Arkansas plantation to the St. Louis waterfront. Before motherhood, Roxy does not attempt escape. Only after becoming a mother and experiencing its power and tenacity does Roxy dare to escape from slavery. Not only the act of escape, but also her means of escape, reflect Roxy's resourcefulness, fearlessness, and confidence.

As she flees from the plantation, Roxy does not attempt to disguise herself, a bold and counterintuitive tactic. In an area populated with people who could recognize her as her master's slave, she floats down the river without any means of concealing her identity. Roxy then sights the *Mogul*, the steamboat she worked on for a few years, and approaches it confidently. She does not fear capture and even relishes the recognition of her identity because she hopes to rekindle old acquaintances. After boarding the *Mogul*, Roxy considers herself amongst friends and experiences no dread of her master, recognition, or capture. Even as the *Mogul* steams past her former plantation, Roxy remains on deck viewing the onlookers with amusement. She watches them search for her while she enjoys safety on the riverboat. But perhaps she is not safe on the boat; perhaps her sense of security is false. As the search party examines the shore for Roxy, it surely sees the *Mogul* pass. Twain does not indicate how near to shore the steamer is; however, if Roxy could see the search party, the search party may have been able to see her. Yet she feels no anxiety about recognition, most likely because she more closely resembles a free white woman than a runaway slave. To casual observers, Roxy becomes just another American woman traveling on a steamboat.

Roxy easily could have passed as white. A hindrance to her passing would have been her attire, for before her escape attempt on the *Mogul*, Roxy's best dress is a "cheap curtain-calico thing" (Twain, 1959: 14). But Sally Jackson, the head chambermaid of the *Mogul*, gives Roxy "good clothes" to wear (110). Sally does not just offer Roxy clean clothes, or fresh clothes, or dry clothes. She furnishes Roxy with "good clothes," indicating that the articles themselves convey some level of social standing greater than, or at least different from, that of a slave.

But Roxy does not need to do anything to her physical appearance to be perceived as white. Roxy "was of majestic form and stature" with "imposing and statuesque" attitudes and "noble and stately" gestures (Twain, 1959: 8). "Her complexion was very fair . . . her face was full of character and expression, her eyes were brown and . . . she had a heavy suit of fine soft hair which was also brown" (8). Twain further describes Roxy's face as "shapely, intelligent, comely—even beautiful" (8). Roxy looks like a white woman and "to all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody" (Twain 9). Roxy looks like a white woman and bears herself with a grace and dignity only ascribed to white people.

Roxy looks white and carries herself like a white person. Roxy is white in many ways except socially and legally. Although Twain never declares Roxy a white citizen, or even a black slave passing as a white woman, Roxy's acts of escape and tacit passing indeed make her a citizen. Citizenship entails shaping self-representation. Instead of cowering as a fearful slave (an expected depiction), Roxy boldly rides the steamer looking every bit the free white woman. And if citizens "can be thought of as hybrids who even embody polarities," Roxy's race manipulation brings her even more into the realm of citizenship (Baker, 1999: 166). Onboard ship, Roxy simultaneously stands as an enslaved black woman and a free white one. For Roxy, motherhood instills principles of power, privilege, and liberty that carry over from the domestic realm into the public sphere. Yet instead of utilizing her naturally white appearance and white-associated attributes to pass as white to gain freedom and access an American dream, Twain chooses to have Roxy pass as black upon her arrival in St. Louis. In order to avoid detection as a runaway slave, Roxy dresses as a black man and puts on blackface in lieu of walking unhindered to freedom as a white woman.

Roxy as blackface minstrel

Roxy has few acquaintances in St. Louis; and therefore, almost no one could identify her as a black person or a slave. Yet it is in this town of strangers, away from the Arkansas plantation, that Twain decides to conceal Roxy's white skin as well as her gender. Roxy spies her master at a market place in St. Louis. This naturally arouses alarm for Roxy and perhaps the situation warrants a disguise. But choosing to look like a man with a blackened face hardly seems the appropriate ruse for Roxy to employ. Although the sight of

a very dark black man would not have piqued her master's suspicions, it would most likely raise questions from others. Antebellum Missouri was not free, so Roxy, disguised as a black man walking the St. Louis streets, likely would have been stopped and required to produce free papers. This sort of apprehension would explode Roxy's counterfeit appearance. She would be unable to produce free papers because she did not own any, her blackened face would be recognized as false, and upon close inspection, Roxy's long brunette curls and feminine physique easily would reveal her as female. A blackface disguise potentially could be more hazardous for Roxy than relying on her naturally white features. If Roxy had worn her "good clothes," she could have roamed freely around St. Louis with little concern of being revealed as black or being discovered by her master.

Roxy's imposture as a black man seems to distort color and gender designations more so than a decision to remain a white woman would have, but it is not necessarily ineffective. Mary Wollstonecraft posited that in order for women to become citizens that they must become men (Crittenden, 2001: 47). In St. Louis, Roxy needs to continue her quest for freedom and full citizenship, and she needs to find her son. She calls on her inner fortitude, initiated by motherhood and her forays at liberty, to do whatever seems necessary to realize her goals. So Roxy becomes a man.

While precluding her from assimilating into white society, Twain does, however, allow Roxy to pass as a man in blackface. On the surface, Roxy's blackface guise appears to be just that, a disguise, a convenient way to defy detection. But her blackface ploy is not convenient; it requires more effort to assemble and maintain than passing as white would have. And it draws more attention to Roxy than posing as a white woman would. In order to transform into a white woman, Roxy would only have to put on the "good clothes" that Sally Jackson had given her. The blackface costume, however, requires finding a black man to buy clothes from, garnering money to pay him one dollar for the attire, procuring cork or greasepaint with which to blacken her face, blackening her face (which no doubt entailed the aid of a mirror or other looking glass), and maintaining the black make-up in a heavy St. Louis rain.

Twain does not reveal the blackface figure as Roxy until after he introduces the "black face under an old slouch hat" that startles Tom (Twain, 1959: 105). The black face alone is sufficient to invoke clichéd characterizations of black men. Twain temporarily depicts Roxy in blackface, the "singing-dancing-comedy characterization portraying black males as childish, irresponsible, inefficient, lazy, ridiculous in speech, pleasure-seeking, and happy" (Davis, 1991: 51). At this point in the novel, Roxy becomes a disembodied black face devoid of any attributes outside of the hackneyed ones associated with blackface minstrelsy.

As the scene in Tom's St. Louis apartment unfolds, it becomes more ludicrous in its adherence to the conventions of blackface minstrelsy. And if produced on stage, it would have earned hearty laughter. A blackface man, in

an exaggerated low voice, commands a white society male, “Keep still—I’s yo’ mother!” (Twain, 1959: 105). This appears to be a childlike request given in ridiculous speech. The rest of Tom and Roxy’s encounter follows this pattern of comic dialogue. Tom then apologizes to this short blackface man and instead of receiving, “Sho ’nuff, Massa Tom,” he experiences a vernacular rebuke. The hilarity continues. With the lights dimmed low, this blackface impostor settles in to tell a story. He relates to Tom the incredulous tale that he is a white-skinned woman escaping from slavery who arrives at Tom’s doorstep because she is his mother. The scenario ends with the small-framed blackface man, perhaps tripping over his baggy costume, marching white Tom through a rainy St. Louis night at knife-point. Surely Twain wants his readers to find the comedy in this situation. It seems inconceivable that Tom, or anyone else, could take this little blackface upstart seriously.

Carolyn Porter (1990) asserts that Twain’s portrayal of Roxy reveals a world “where mothers are sexual, slaves are powerful, and women are temporarily out of (and thus in) control” (124). Women not under the control of men (i.e.: out of control) are in control of themselves. Being an out of control mother, a slave mother no less, instead of resigning Roxy to the powerless margins of society, allows her to shirk off social restraints and employ the boons of white supremacy to her benefit, which occurs as the blackface minstrel scene unfolds. In this scene, Twain inverts the blackface minstrel conceit of the cross-dressed wench. The cross-dressed wench typically remained silent, and “was established as a thoroughly contained and constrained African American woman” (Bean, 2001: 174). Ordinarily white men played blackface roles, but Twain shifts stereotypes of blackface minstrelsy by applying them to an ostensibly black woman. Instead of having a white man dress as a black man who portrays a silent and domesticated black woman, Twain has a white slave don blackface and dress as a black man who views himself, at least in part, as a white woman. Twain’s version of the wench conceit is anything but silent, contained, and constrained. Instead it explodes with comic dialogue and acerbic parody.

This blackface scene also recalls the lesser-known tradition of black female blackface minstrel performers. Black women, mostly very fair-skinned, in these performances subverted the “dominance of minstrelsy’s containment of the black female body as fixed, unmoving, and confined to the two categories of mulatta or mama,” or in Roxy’s case, “mulatta” and “mama” (Bean, 2001: 181). While Roxy is both “mulatta” and “mama,” her disguise reads as black and male. Roxy as the cross-dressed wench embodies numerous dualities: male/female, white womanhood/black womanhood, white manhood/black manhood, slave/free. It is at this point in the novel that Roxy most fully realizes citizenship and liberty. Roxy becomes a citizen through her pursuit of the public life (Buker, 1999: 198). She becomes the hybrid being embodying polarities (Buker, 1999: 166). And if liberty is the “continuous activity of differently . . . articulating . . . our associations with others and things about us,” then Roxy certainly finds freedom in creating this new publicly performed self (Flower, 2001: 67).

Blackface minstrelsy, as a performance of “inauthenticity,” creates a hyper-whiteness. This hyper-whiteness emerges from the performers’ ability temporarily to “embody” cultural norms associated with blackness. This hyper-whiteness also relies on “denying blacks the same options for self-transformation” (Browder, 2000: 49, 50). Only whites can put on and take off racial stigma at will, so blackface minstrelsy simultaneously allows white men to explore a different race and yet remain completely white while doing so. If blackface minstrelsy is a way for white men to attain hyper-whiteness, it becomes a means for white men to participate fully in the human privileges afforded by white supremacy as it gives them access to all of the benefits of American citizenship. But if white males’ acting in blackface productions reveals their desire to try on blackness and their success in procuring the benefits of American white supremacy, then Roxy’s blackface portrayal indicates the same desires and successes. In order to find her son, Roxy necessarily becomes a white male who can enact blackness within the social safety of a blackface minstrel performance. This performance generates admission to the human rights and freedoms endowed by white supremacy, which allow Roxy to search for and confront her son. To fulfill her role as a mother, Roxy, a slave woman, must transform into a free white man.

Conclusion

Katherine Ellison (2005) argues that motherhood makes women reexamine their priorities and redirect their energies (114). Defining “‘smart’ as a mindset that helps [mothers] and [their] children survive,” highlights that motherhood also increases women’s intelligence (Ellison, 2005 150). Motherhood introduces power into women lives, and Ellison further argues that once accustomed to the domestic power of motherhood, women extend this power into the public realm and become more inclined to buck repressive social systems (106, 112, 113). Motherhood motivates much of *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, and these byproducts of motherhood impel Roxy to action.

Although readers meet Roxy after she gives birth, we can reasonably imagine that Roxy, a socially powerless slave before motherhood, discovers the generative power of carrying a baby to term, unleashes previously untapped reserved power during childbirth, and experiences the domestic power of creating and ordering a world for her son. Becoming a mother forces Roxy to examine her slave status and the slave status inherited by her son. Her priorities shift from pleasing her master to freeing her son, because she sees freedom as his only means of survival. In other words, motherhood gives Roxy a type of power and intelligence previously unknown. With this increased power and resourcefulness, Roxy devises a plan to free her son. By conceiving and executing the plan to switch babies, Roxy challenges the restrictive social strictures of white supremacy. Roxy turns her black slave son into a free white male citizen. Providing freedom for her son eventually induces Roxy to fight for her own freedom, which, in turn, introduces her into the public realm and yields more

power to rail against social fetters. She later, albeit temporarily, endows herself with free citizen status as she performs a blackface minstrel act. These race changes question societal norms, but in the motherhood paradigm they also prove smart, because they advance survival.

The troubles and anxieties in Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* stem from notions and misconceptions of racial identity. In order to appreciate how race impacts privilege and freedom, it becomes necessary to understand white supremacy, racial passing, and blackface minstrelsy. Theories of white supremacy establish the US as a country that only allows full humanity, freedom, and citizenship to its white inhabitants. Racial passing, then, becomes a way for non-whites to use deception in order to enter into this system and to achieve and maintain the rights denied them by white supremacy. And blackface minstrelsy locates the height of American privilege in the ability to accommodate blackness temporarily. Blackface minstrelsy places white males at the site of racial crossover. This theory denies white women opportunities temporarily to put on blackness, and this male-domination further removes black women from participating in mainstream American cultures. In other words, blackface minstrelsy allows access to US privilege to white men alone.

Twain, although ultimately upholding American social norms, uses and upends both passing and blackface minstrelsy to allow Roxy to attain some benefits of white American citizenship. Through Roxy, Twain challenges prevailing notions of blackface minstrelsy and gender, and by exploding those notions gains her access, rather than denial, to the privileges of antebellum American citizenship. Accessing privilege depends on finessing identity. And violation of custom yields acceptance rather than denial to society. So deception and duality, then, become essential to enjoying entitlements of U.S. citizenship in Twain's novel. Twain evokes the "experience of freedom through images of divided selves," with Roxy standing as an example (Horn, 1996: 2). In the novel, Roxy exists as mulatta and mama, female and male, black and white, slave and free. Her travels between these dualities introduce her to American citizenship and the liberties inherent in citizenship. And motherhood compels Roxy to explore avenues that lead to freedom. *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is a novel concerned with social customs. And in it, Mark Twain questions white supremacy, racial passing, and blackface minstrelsy through the lens of Roxy, a seemingly "contained and constrained" mulatta slave mother.

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Matrimandir

We are in India on a long, winding dirt road, in a line that is hundreds of people long. My father once observed, after spending eight hours in a Thai market, that crowds in the East are not the same as crowds in the West. Perhaps it is the lack of collective impatience (or self-consciousness) that breeds a benign and comfortable anonymity, as if you were one fish in a school of many, all heading somewhere, bumping gently against one another as you surrender to the greater, invisible tide that jostles you. It is as if your destination, instead of a pressing end in itself, becomes a small pulse in a larger force. I suppose the same could be said for queues of people where they occur; though, in my experience here in India, queues don't exist—not in the linear sense. More often, when buying tickets or boarding a train, we have encountered a boisterous, but penetrable, mob, which, upon closer inspection, is made up of a large portion of bystanders who may not have any interest in what is attainable at the front of the line. Yet the Indian style of “lining up” constitutes a kind of benign and unified co-existence of wills and tempers, rather than an orderly arrangement of exasperated suspension (the kind that descends into a hopeless counting of minutes and invariably makes me feel like I'm in purgatory, not living my life).

Despite their apparent scarcity, we now find ourselves in a long, orderly and slow moving line, in the countryside, a couple of kilometres from the Bay of Bengal. We wait, not with impatience but with a spirit of slowed-down anticipation, in the highest heat of April. Mercifully, the road is lined with trees and vegetation. This and the palest of breezes bring some respite. We have been asked to remain silent, to induce a contemplative and receptive state. The people in line with us are here from other places in India. There are also people from other parts of the world. Matrimandir is not even visible from

where we stand. But that is what we crane our necks to gain sight of. Seekers must be patient.

Many of the trees are in bloom. Frangipani blossoms waft divine fragrance. Huge tamarinds lean over us like protective bodies. The husks and black pits lay scattered on the ground, perhaps discarded by monkeys. Amongst them I spy a whole pod and though I sense that, given the solemnity of the walk, this might be an inappropriate thing to do, the animal scavenger in me picks it up anyway. I peel it apart and suck out the gorgeous sour, sweetness. Tamarind is the perfect antidote to heat.

Matrimandir means Temple of The Mother. In the teachings of Sri Arobindo, The Mother represents the great evolutionary, conscious and intelligent principle of life. The Universal Mother helps humanity move beyond its present limitations into the next step of its evolutionary adventure, the supramental consciousness. This is more or less what was written, as I have scrawled it in my journal, on the wall of the visitor's centre. Our tour of Auroville, the city of dawn, an international "city" that is an experiment in the evolution of human consciousness, ends with this optional pilgrimage to Matrimandir. We decide to come along. Others have come on buses. The numbers are shocking. We're not sure what this is all about. Touring this place, the roads winding through fields and lush forests with clusters of wonderful dwellings, the visitors' centre with quotes from the Mother including a long piece about how she hopes this place will never become a religion, the city plan laid out in the design of a galaxy spiralling around Matrimandir, and now this pilgrimage of sorts to the temple dedicated to the universal mother, we find ourselves drawn in. Being here is like an awakening, or like dreaming—I can't tell.

It is probably an hour before we see it. Matrimandir is a giant geodesic dome covered in gold discs that reflect the sun. The earth is dug away around it and it emerges out of the ground like a great growing sphere of light. There are twelve gardens surrounding the dome, named by the Mother: *Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Utility, Progress, Youth, Harmony, Perfection*. She has named the land surrounding Matrimandir, *Peace*. The Mother was a namer of things. The nearby city of Pondicherry, France's first and only colonial port in India, is deeply connected to Auroville. Many of the buildings around town bear small, unobtrusive marble plaques with names given by her. This was one of the first signs that I might be on a quest rather than a vacation; we wandered the colonial streets along the water and encountered engravings in hand script with words like, *Serenity, Contemplation, Solace*. I was intrigued by the idea of a woman called the Mother going around town naming buildings.

My companion and I have taken our walks through the streets of Pondicherry in early morning as the sun comes up on the bay or in late afternoon when the heat of the day begins to abate. On one morning, we meet a woman who invites us inside her home. She leads us down the hall to a sparsely furnished living room to meet her brother, sister and mother. We sip mildly spiced lemonade

as they tell us how they came here from the north to join the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Her brother is an architect and an artist. She runs a farm and teaches boxing and swimming for the ashram. This project is separate from the city of Auroville, but dedicated to the philosophies of Sri Aurobindo. He begins to tell me a bit about Sri Aurobindo's teaching of yoga. I enthusiastically offer that I also practice yoga. *But this is yoga that you can do without moving*, he says.

The Mother was born, Mirra Alfassa, in Paris, of Egyptian and Turkish parents. She had been a spiritual seeker since childhood. When she met Sri Aurobindo in India she recognized him as the guide encountered in her visions. Sri Aurobindo's given name was Aravind Ghose. Born in Calcutta, his Western education in Darjeeling led him to English public school and Cambridge where he was a brilliant scholar. He abandoned England and his opportunity to work in the colonial administration. Upon returning home he became increasingly active in India's growing movement towards independence. When he was arrested by the British administration and detained for one year, he experienced spiritual revelations that led him to take refuge in the French colony of Pondicherry where he would develop his spiritual faculties and become a guru to many. The website of Auroville suggests that "the great originality of Sri Aurobindo is to have fused the modern scientific concept of evolution with the perennial gnostic experience of an all-pervading divine consciousness supporting all phenomenal existence. His synthesis was not a philosophic construct, but a realization stemming from direct spiritual experience." Sri Aurobindo believed India had the gift of spirituality to give to the world.

When Sri Aurobindo met the Mother he saw in her "an embodiment of the dynamic expressive aspect of evolutionary, creative Force." In India this elemental force is traditionally expressed and described as the "Supreme Mother." He called her the Mother because she represented an embodiment of an archetype, of a unifying force. The two worked together to find practical ways to realize his vision of human evolution. I try to think of a spiritual movement, a cult or a religion with a man and a woman, a mother and a father figure sharing positions of leadership, sharing voices of wisdom. They are equally quoted in all the panels I have seen. Though he was only a few years older, she far outlived him and it was her vision that guided the creation of Auroville, as it organized itself into a city, and the building of Matrimandir. She chose the spot on the map for the geographical centre of the town and when the architect drove to that spot he found a Banyan tree in an open field.

It is said that Buddha found enlightenment under a Banyan tree. I was a dedicated climber, sketcher and hugger of trees as a child and the Banyan tree is not like any other. The first one I saw was in Thailand on the property of a remote temple; people made pilgrimages there to touch the roots, to tie ribbons and garlands of flowers around the trunks of the sacred tree. The Banyan is in the fig family. It is unique because its branches form aerial roots that reach down into the earth and become new trees. Each of the new trees is physically connected to the mother tree. They are a family. When you walk

under a Banyan it is like you can see her children and grandchildren gathered around—taking life from her and supporting her at the same time.

While the others ahead of us file into Matrimandir we are ushered to the benches around the century-old Banyan to sit and wait. When it is our turn we approach the massive structure from a large ramp that actually leads down into the ground at the base of the dome. We take off our shoes and walk up a series of ramps that spiral towards the centre of the dome. It is cool inside and dim. Much of the inner dome is still under construction and there are building materials and scaffolding lying around below us. Twelve meditation rooms circle around the chamber. They are named for aspiring levels of consciousness and each represented by a different colour.

The Inner Chamber is the central space designed as a four-petal flower. We walk slowly up and up and then we are at the entrance to the room. It is roped off. We are not to go in, just look for a few seconds and move on. I have heard about pilgrimages like this. People journey for days in this country barefoot, on their knees, up hundreds of well worn stone steps, for a kiss, a hug, a touch from, a glimpse of, the guru. But there is no person here; it is a room. The Inner Chamber is huge. The dome soars above with twelve pillars supporting it. The room is completely white. White marble walls. White floor. In the centre is a crystal globe that suffuses sunlight, which falls in a single ray through an opening at the apex of the sphere. The Mother said, *The most important thing is this: the play of the sun on the centre. Because that becomes the symbol, the symbol of future realizations. There are no images, no organized meditations, no flowers, no incense, no religion or religious forms...* I lose my breath. Then I am asked to move along, keep walking.

A bus takes us back. My companion and I are set to leave Pondicherry tomorrow. I am distraught. I feel can't go yet. I am not done here. My sleep is restless that night and after breakfast I go to the Auroville information centre in town. I tell them I want to go back to Matrimandir again. I feel I have to go back. *Yes, they smile, many people feel that way.* They explain that once you have been to see Matrimandir you are allowed to go back for a meditation. You can spend an hour in the Inner Chamber. *If this is something you feel you need to do then we strongly encourage you to do it.* I explain our schedule, the bus tickets leaving today, our flight for Kerala leaving Munnar early the next morning. We must get to Munnar tonight. *There is always a way* one of the men in the office says. He makes a phone call, inquires about a hired car leaving from Auroville, driving to Munnar. It is one of the Ashram's cars and a reasonable price considering it's a two-hour trip. They make arrangements for us. That afternoon we check out of our hotel, put our bags in the car and drive back along the lush roads.

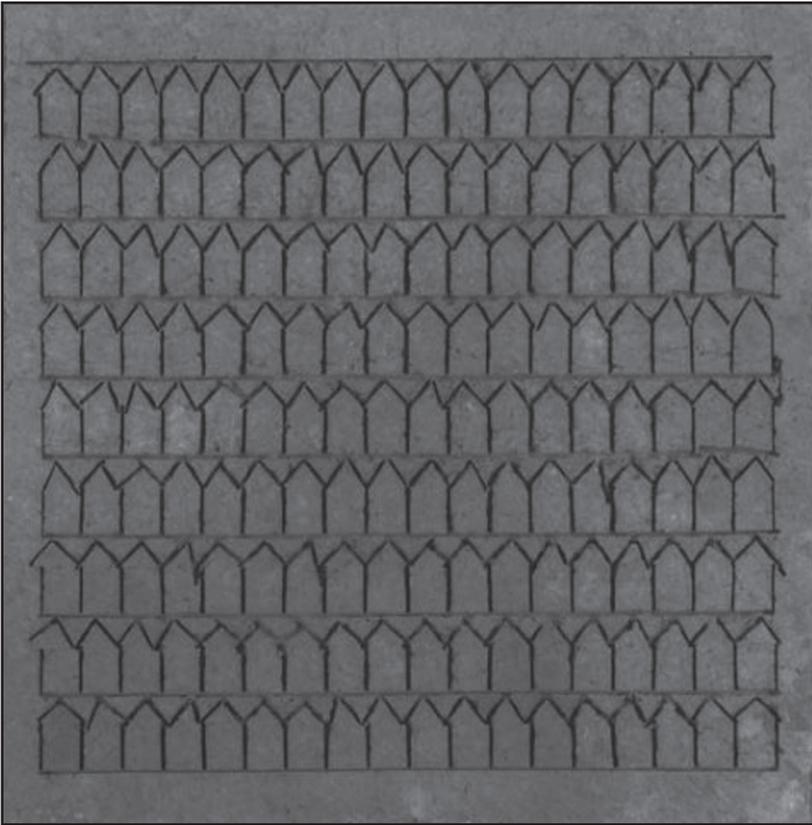
On the second visit to Matrimandir there is no line-up. It is one of the hours in the day set aside for public meditation. We must check in at the kiosk, situated at the beginning of the path we spent so long on yesterday. A woman writes down our names in the book and gives us each a card. I realize

as we set out again, this time on our own, walking along the tree-lined dirt road, that yesterday was the trial, the payment of dues. If one is still interested after two hours in the hot sun and a three-second glimpse at the room, then you have earned the right to come back and use the space as it was intended. Aurovilleans of all ages and descriptions are walking, some hurrying along on the path. This is a daily ritual for them, they are coming from their labour, their homes, their day of activity, to the temple. *Only for those*, said the Mother, *who are serious, sincere, who really want to learn to concentrate*. Some greet each other with waves as they arrive on the path.

We reach the dome. It is still massive and awesome, but this time everything seems different. It is less dreamlike, more real. We take off our shoes and walk up the ramp again. A man stands at the door. We show him our cards. He points me to a cushion on the floor. There are many people already sitting, spaced well apart and arranged in concentric circles around the crystal in the middle. The room is overwhelmingly white and enormous. The crystal is stunning. I can't think of another word. I feel stunned, small and completely awake. I sit down and close my eyes. I think that the top of my head is being ripped off. I try to focus on my breath. I am not experienced at meditation. My mind wanders. I try to savour this opportunity, to allow it to transform me in some way. I listen to my breathing. And then it comes. The music. There is a symphony that begins in my head. Beautiful, delightful music, like Handel or Schubert, but nothing I have ever heard before. It is there as my mind floats in and out of attention. It runs like a stream through my consciousness, until someone taps me on the shoulder and whispers that it is time to go.

We walk out along the path, unable to speak to each other, completely absorbed in our own perception. We get to the kiosk again. The taxi is there waiting for us. She takes my card, stamps it and hands it back to me. *This is your pass. Save this, for with it you can come back again, anytime*. I look at her black, glassy eyes and repeat her words back to her, *I can come back, anytime?* She moves her head slightly from side to side to indicate affirmation, looking straight at me, smiling knowingly, as a mother would smile when her child has just begun to learn something, something the mother has known for some time now, and she smiles, the mother, to see her small beloved in the dawn of her own understanding.

Folio



Zarina, "Traces," cast paper, 29 x 29 x 1, 1981.

Editor's Notes

*My child is rain
on the tamarind tree*

—Meena Alexander, “Blood Line”

I am pleased to introduce the poetry of Meena Alexander as featured poet in Folio. The works featured in this issue range from poems collected in *River and Bridge* (1996), to poems from Alexander's new collection, *Quickly Changing River* (TriQuarterly Books/Northwestern University Press, 2008). This selection of mother-child poems reflects Alexander's skill in presenting the reader with a poetic sensibility that includes South Asian influences and multiple linguistic and cultural voices—Malayam, English, the translation of Ovid's Latin, Sufi mysticism, references to Krishna, Gandhi, and Christ. Through these polyvocal texts, the central threads are inextricably linked to the narratives of motherhood, of mother-child relations. The mother's body is one that is steeped in blood, fiercely connected to the natural, spiritual, and mythical worlds. In her poem “Passion,” Alexander writes: “I am/the sting of love/the blood hot flute/the face/carved in the window/watching as the god set sail/across the waters/risen from the Cape,/Sri Krishna in a painted catamaran.”

Accompanied by images by the artist Zarina, Meena Alexander's poems provide a haunting, fascinating reading. The works have Alexander's consistent lyric voicings, undercut by an unflinching vision of the world as it is, raw, infused with images of earth, water, sun, places that taste of childhood and motherhood, entangled with history and memory.

—Rishma Dunlop



Zarina, "Ghar (Home)," cast paper, 24 x 32 x 1, 1988.

Everything Strikes Loose

In the end
everything strikes loose

Look at my hands
that held you
as the pepper vines
hold to the mango tree
my child, my first child

What fuels the mind
I tell myself
is not grief,
not waste:
just a bird beak
scuffing up leaves
at the tree's base.

Yet see
the pepper vines slip,
roots clustering
colorless as air.

I plucked the first
fruits for you,
the sour stuff
you spat, the sweet
dribbled down your chin.

You were greedy then
"Amma!" you cried, pointing

Meena Alexander

I could not see
if the blackness
at the pepper's core
had burnt you.

The glare
was in my eyes,
the flickering leaves,
the golden Pamba river.

Now the river trickles
through low hills,
it tastes of childhood

The boats fly no flags
the races are all done
and flat barges driven by men
bear cinnamon, cloves, dried pepper.

South of the Nilgiris

My son who is young
just six this year
knows the red soil of our land

Turning it in his palm
he said
“My sister is this earth
I am water
we will mix together.”
I heard this in a dream

He pointed at my belly
watermelon swollen
streaked as if mud
had dribbled over
lighter flesh

“I am glad
I was not born a girl.
I will never hold that weight
in my belly.”

He spun on his heels,
on his lean shoulders
I saw wings of bone
pale as the stones of Kozhencheri

“Mother!” he laughed
“You know I am not a girl!”

Under my ribs
she turned
his unborn sister,
green as a wave
on the southern coast
ready to overwhelm me,
overwhelm even the distant hills.

Passion

I.

After childbirth
the tenth month's passion:

a bloodiness
still shifting at her core
she crawls on the mud floor

past the empty rice sacks
blown large with dust,
rims distended like sails.

Her skin scrapes a tin bowl
with water from the stream,
a metal frame

bearing a god
whose black blue face
melts into darkness, as a gem might

tossed back
into its own
implacable element.

She waits,
she sets her sari to her teeth
and when the chattering begins

fierce, inhuman joy,
monkeys rattling the jamun tree,
bellies distended, washed with wind

she screams
and screams
a raw, ungoverned thing.

II.

There are beetles scabbling
in the open sacks,
chaff flies in the half light
a savage sound in her eyes
struck free

the human realms of do and don't
the seemingly precise, unalterable keys
dashed to a frenzy
and still the voice holds.

III.

One summer's day
I saw a heron
small and grey
blinded by an eagle's claw

it dashed its head
against the Coromandel rock.

The bleeding head
hung on
by a sinew or two
as the maimed bird
struck
and struck again

then turned to rise
an instant
on its sunlit wings.

It was carved in bronze
against the crawling foam

agony

the dead cannot know
in their unaltered kingdoms.

IV.

I am she
the woman after giving birth

life
to give life
torn and hovering

as bloodied fluids
baste the weakened flesh.

For her
there are no words,
no bronze, no summoning.

I am her sight
her hearing
and her tongue.

I am she
smeared with ash
from the black god's altar

I am
the sting of love
the blood hot flute
the face
carved in the window,
watching as the god set sail

across the waters
risen from the Cape,
Sri Krishna in a painted catamaran.

I am she
tongueless in rhapsody

the stars of glass

Meena Alexander

nailed to the Southern sky.

Ai ai

she cried.

They stuffed
her mouth with rags

and pulled her
from the wooden bed

and thrust her
to the broken floor.

I, I.

Blood Line

—for Svati Mariam, one year old

My child is rain
on the tamarind tree

She is an enemy
to burnt grass,
to fruit sieved
with metal

Struck
from a stunted branch.

She is my mother's
mother who cries in me,
my line of blood
our perpetuity.

When wild deer
track the mud
for buried roots

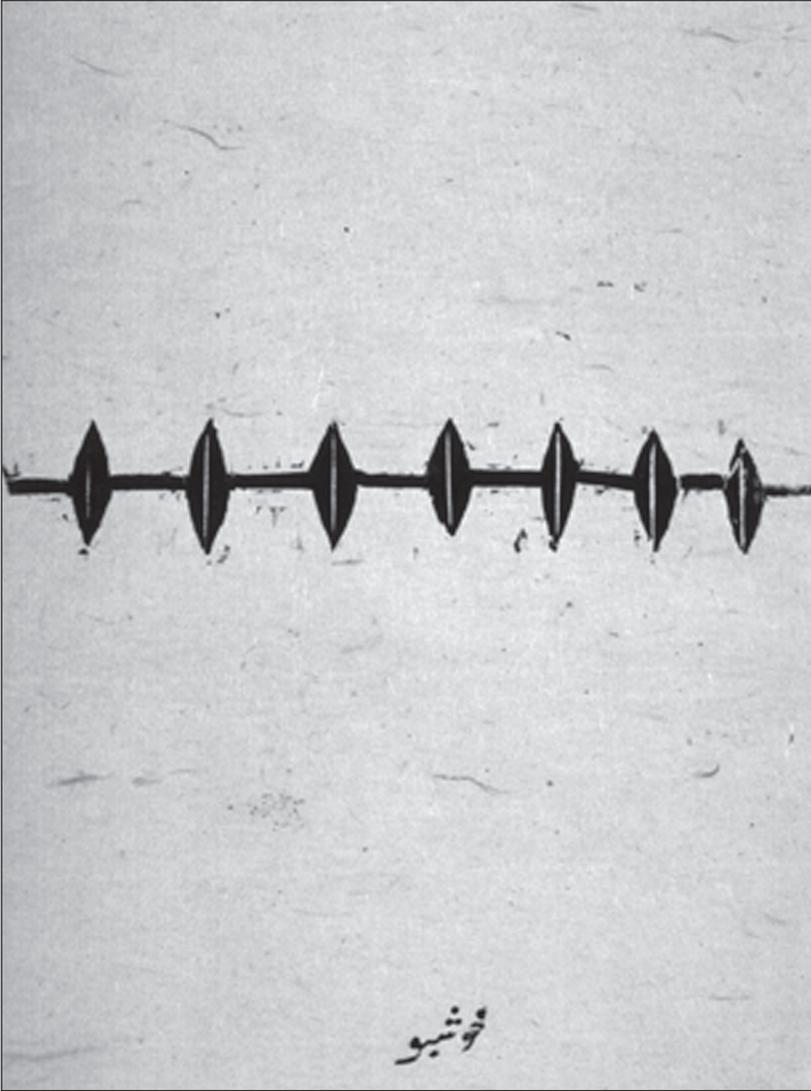
I'll grip my blouse
and loosen it

I'll show her how
my throat can hang
a woman's weight.

In the sky's bowl
after a season of storm
we'll watch girls
with antlers in their hair

Meena Alexander

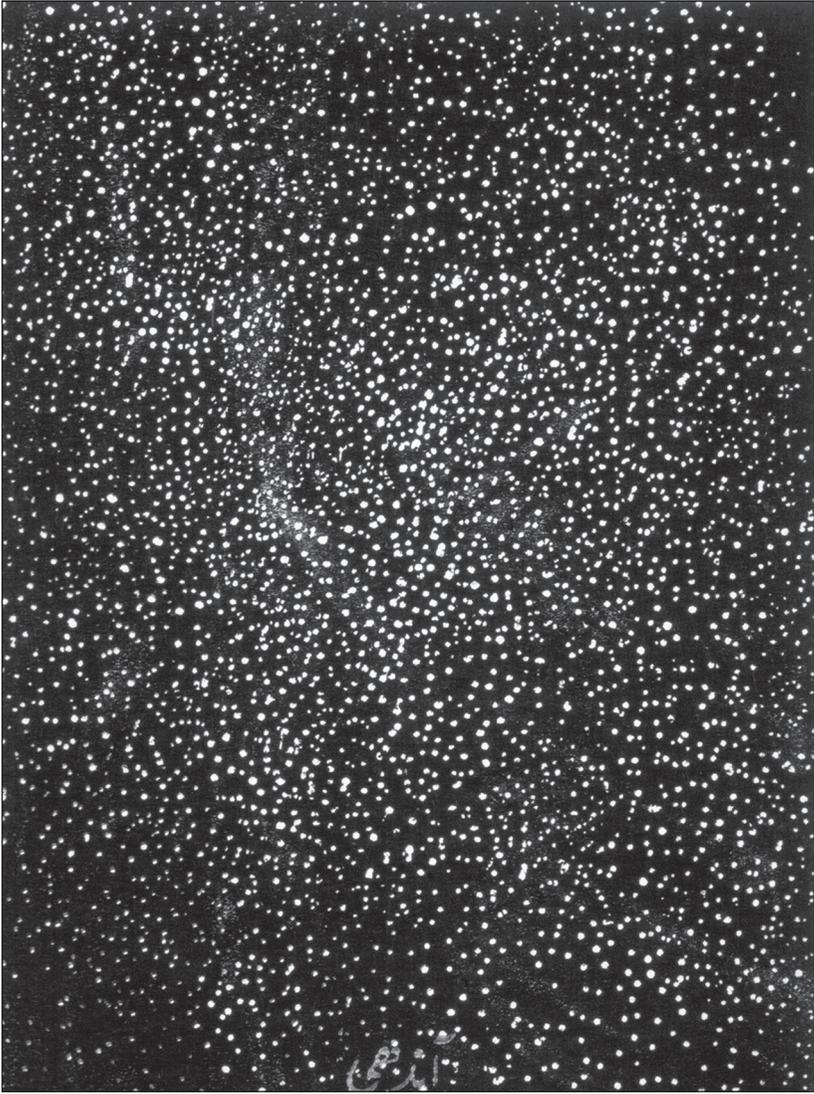
Dance, confounding
ancient hunters
who stumble westward
broken bows in hand.



*Zarina, "Home is a Foreign Place," series of woodcuts,
detail "Fragrance," 8 x 6, 1997.*



*Zarina, "Home is a Foreign Place," series of woodcuts,
detail "Rain," 8 x 6, 1997.*



*Zarina, "Home is a Foreign Place," series of woodcuts,
detail "Dust Storm," 8 x 6, 1997.*

Veil

Amma's face is up close, she is tying my sash
My dress is pink with tiny white spots

Her eyes open wide as she stares at my thighs
I tilt my face away, light strikes me.

Grandfather is strolling in the mulberry grove
His walking stick, covered in bits of torn grass.

Does amma see marks the color of burnt milk
Where grandfather hurt me?

Why does she shut her eyes?
I want us to be a mother and daughter

In someone else's poem.
How old was I?

Seven, at the rim of turning eight.
That season when mulberry bushes

Loosen their sleeves
And silk from grandmother's trousseau

Starts its slow pucker and float.
All through her wedding grandmother's face was veiled

Silk from Varanasi the color of moonlight
—Veiled with a special veil...

Burned up in love and longing...
When grandmother died, she was wrapped

In her wedding sari so worms the color of milk
Could bite into her flesh.
How old was I when they laid grandfather
Down beside her in the muddy earth?

I cannot tell.
I tore skins from mulberry stalks using my teeth.

I refused to swallow the wet sour stuff.
Some things you never forget.

Note:

In italics are the words of the Sufi poet Faridudin Attar (c.1230 CE) describing the most celebrated of the Sufi women mystics, Rabi'a al Adawiyya (c. 801 CE) also known as Rabi'a of Basra.

Three for Summer

Heaviness fell into things that had no weight.

—Ovid

1. Neela Marya

Sometimes things turn small and hard.
I like that, a pebble, I dug it out of the earth,
lifted it up.

Hard white with streaks of blue inside.
The blue shifted around, swirling

As clouds do in the monsoon sky
Just before the rains start up and the air

Boils up, spills into indigo. Lord Krishna's color.
Neela is blue in Malayalam.

Neela Marya I like to call myself.
If any one calls, I will answer to that name.

I lift up the pebble, wipe the dirt off with my skirt.
I cradle the stone in my skirt, stare at it.

My skirt is rose colored cotton. Fine cotton
When the sun shines, you can see my legs.

My legs are solid flesh amma says
So the sun can't shine through.

Amma makes me wear a petticoat.
It bunches up when I climb the guava tree.

I tear it off with a guava branch.
I say "Look amma, the tree did it!"

But she always gets me new petticoats.
White muslin, trimmed with lace.

If I had Brussels lace I would trim your petticoats
Amma says. I know she loves me so.

Once I came in torn and wet
The white petticoat between my knees.

I wanted to cry Jesus Lord turn me hard and cold,
A pebble with dirt on it

That way no one will see through me.
As amma stared I felt my flesh melt

Into clouds, slow clouds in monsoon air
Just before the sun burns through.

2. What Ayah Says

In dreams, the world is very small,
A pebble streaked with jet

Flecks of carmine rush under its skin
Held to the light it gleams as a jamun might

Ruby pocked with indigo.
I splash my hands with well water

Run my thumb over the pebble
Hold it up to the sunlight.

I set it on my tongue,
Close my lips and swallow hard.

Ayah says that when children
Swallow bits of bone,

Buttons, stones, they drop right out.
I wonder if the pebble will.

In front of the house, far from the toilet hole
is the well filled with black water.

Everything rises from the well and ends up in it
Ayah says. Even girls I ask. Especially girls ayah says

Chewing hard on her clove. Ayah's back tooth hurts.
She chews cloves to keep the hurt from spilling.

When children swallow things they shouldn't
They turn into stones, she says

They tumble into the toilet hole.
I squat on the toilet hole
The night owl cries so bright
It perches in the leaves of the jackfruit tree.

Jackfruit is as big as a baby's head.
With spikes on it, and pock marks hot as lead

If a jackfruit drops on your head
You will go to sleep ayah said.

3. Dark Door

A child went through a dark door into grandfather's library
The door was cut in jackfruit wood,

Varnished the color of burnt leaf.
Breath stops when I think of that door.

A child in a white dress walked in.
Later a child walked out.

Her eyes were burnt holes for the sun to shine through.
I do not like to say I.

She
Not I.

Not I, Not I.
What happened in grandfather's library makes me float.

No before, no after.
No up, down, down, up.

Who will save her?
Who will save Neela Marya?

She doesn't walk on water like Jesus or Gandhi,
She floats on it, eyes shut, bones poking through.

Will fishing nets turn parachutes, sail homeward?
Her dress was mussed up, wet.

Whose hand was on her thigh, wrist with hairs white
As the cabbage butterfly?

I held onto the kitchen door
Amma I cried, no sounds came out of my mouth

I want to kneel inside your red sari,
Let the pleats swallow me.

Hand covered in a white towel you stirred the pot
It swarmed with sliced guavas, figs, mango pulp,

You trickled in crushed almonds, rosewater.
The towel over your phantom fist

Kept hot bubbles from hurting.
Amma, amma, noke, Nyan a, Nyan a I cried,

Amma look its me , look I, amma, me
But my lips were shut tight.

Later to keep me from floating
I crouched by the wellside, picked a tiny pebble

Swallowed it. The pebble was the color
Of bright mist at monsoon time.

But clouds above the guava tree
Blew about so swift, it hurt to see

I made my eyes huge.

Meena Alexander

Acknowledgements:

“Everything Strikes Loose” was first published in *River and Bridge* (Toronto: South Asian Review Press, 1996).

“South of the Nilgiris” was first published in *River and Bridge* (Toronto: South Asian Review Press, 1996).

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“Blood Line” was first published in *River and Bridge* (Toronto: South Asian Review Press, 1996).



Meena Alexander. Photo: Robin Holland.

Book Reviews

Raise Up a Child: Human Development in an African American Family

Edith Hudley, Wendy Haight, and Peggy Miller.
Chicago: Lyceum Books, 2003.

Reviewed by Dawn Wright Williams

In *Raise Up a Child*, storyteller Edith Hudley shares her life experiences growing up in rural Texas during the Jim Crow era. Presented as an oral history, Wendy Haight and Peggy Miller explore the life of Edith Hudley and show how the strength of her family and extended community supported her to overcome life's obstacles and live a fulfilled life.

Raise Up a Child focuses on human development, in particular child development in African American families. Authors Haight and Miller recognize the lack of research focusing on the development of African American children and other children of colour within the context of their particular cultural values and beliefs. To expand the field of child development, they believe that a diverse group of voices needs to be heard.

This book is written for a dual audience; the authors describe it as a “hybrid text, reaching a general readership and a more specialized audience of scholars and practitioners.” They seek this dual audience by offering Edith Hudley’s life story in her own words and supplementing it with a “series of scholarly interludes.” Alternating between colloquial narrative and informed analysis, the book follows the various phases of Hudley’s life and offers practical scholarly insight for those in the human development professions. As well, there are three appendices that refer to the important events and people in Hudley’s life, and provide academic notes that give the anthropological and sociological contexts for her narrative.

The work is comprised of five major parts that recount the significant memories and experiences of Edith Hudley, while demonstrating the effects

of her having a loving and spiritually enriched childhood that carried her through difficult life experiences. She lost her mother at age ten, for example, and experienced racial discrimination and sexual exploitation. The unique offering of this book, however, is its examination of Hudley's positive life experiences. Haight and Miller argue for the importance of Hudley's story, not as a stereotypical "virtuous, strong black grandmother" story, but as a contrast to the typical "risk and disadvantage" narratives that are often found in scholarly works on African American human development.

Edith Hudley's vibrant and colourful stories evoke the joyful memories she has of her childhood with her parents, of growing into adulthood, and becoming a wife and mother herself under the supportive guidance of the "other mothers" she had in her life. Further, she shares the story of becoming an "other mother" to her own granddaughter, who was abandoned by Hudley's daughter-in-law, and to the other children she cares for from her Utah church congregation.

Raise Up a Child offers an African American perspective on child rearing that reflects a general spiritual and cultural experience that is shared historically by many in African American communities. It offers readers a first-person account and demonstrates the need to study diverse cultural models of human development. It also serves as a useful instructional text for readers interested in positive child rearing practices.

Family Secrets: Crossing the Colour Line

Catherine Slaney.

Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2003.

Reviewed by Karen Nelson Villanueva

In 1975, when a renowned sociologist and authority on Black people in Canada discovers the Abbott Collection, Catherine Slaney's uncle decides that it is time to reveal the family secret: that Slaney's family is descended from Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott, the first Canadian-born Black doctor. At age 24, Slaney and her family discover their Black heritage when they were formerly living as white.

Published by Natural Heritage Books, a publishing house that celebrates the rich history and contribution of Blacks in Canada, *Family Secrets: Crossing the Colour Line* attempts to tell the story of Slaney's ancestors. The author traces the Abbott's history as former slaves in the United States, their arrival in Canada, how her great-great-grandfather, Anderson Ruffin Abbott, became

the first Canadian-born Black to graduate as a medical doctor from the University of Toronto, and her reunion with “lost” Black relations in the United States. This is a story of a mixed-descent Black family which exemplifies the ancestry of many who have “passed” for white.

Although she has known for thirty years of her multi-racial heritage, Slaney insists she is white and continues to “pass.” She tells of attending a workshop for women writers of colour where the presenter mistook her for white; henceforth she felt unaccepted by people of colour. At the same time, she recounts that white people repeatedly ask why she is dark-skinned. When she attributes her skin colour to a fallacious Spanish great-grandmother, she fails to recognize this rejection of her whiteness. In another instance, she visits a church of light-skinned Blacks in Detroit. When the congregants assume she is Black, she believes they are mistaken and clings steadfastly to her desire to be white, despite all indications to the contrary. At every juncture, Slaney fails to prove that she is not a light-skinned Black woman passing for white.

Slaney’s unwillingness to interrogate her own identity is disappointing. She wants to be proud of her ancestry but is unwilling to embrace her complex identity as a woman who is part Black. In fact, she claims the “one drop rule”—that Blackness is determined by one drop of Black blood—no longer exists. Regrettably, Slaney misses an important opportunity to celebrate her multi-cultural identity, and to serve as an example for others of mixed-racial heritage. It is especially unfortunate that she chooses instead to deny her Black heritage and proclaim her whiteness.

The Mommy Brain: How Motherhood Makes Us Smarter

Katherine Ellison.

Jackson, Tennessee: Basic Books, 2005.

Reviewed by Cyndi Brannen

In *The Mommy Brain: How Motherhood Makes Us Smarter*, Katherine Ellison provides neurological evidence to help women justify their decision to become a mother *and* demonstrates how mothers often realign their full-time career goals once their heightened intelligence takes over their previously selfish—and sluggish—brains. Ellison herself was once a globetrotting reporter who shifted her career focus in order to write from home while raising her children. The result, obviously, is *The Mommy Brain*. Given her position

of privilege—she can, after all, stay at home and write books—it is not surprising that she has a very positive outlook on motherhood. This perspective guides her review of studies on how motherhood enhances the brain.

She opens the book by exploring the pervasive belief that motherhood makes women stupid, that we become hyper-focused on our offspring to the detriment of our co-workers and non-parents everywhere. From this point forward, Ellison works diligently to counter the “placenta dementia” view. She does an excellent job of summarizing complex neurophysiological studies in ways that are accessible to others like her—women who are university educated and highly literate.

My criticism of the book lies in Ellison’s position that motherhood is universally beneficial for women. Yes, it is true that studies have found that mothers have higher levels of certain neurochemicals, namely oxytocin, and that there are increased areas of activity in mother’s brains in certain situations. However, most of these studies are based on comparative analyses with animal experiments. Arguably, human mothers have more complex environments to deal with than a rat mom faced with the challenge of retrieving a fruit loop for her offspring. Ellison almost entirely ignores the complexity of human motherhood throughout the book. For example, she ignores the differential impacts of breastfeeding and formula feeding on a mother’s hormone and stress levels (see Groer, 2005).

When she is not summarizing studies, Ellison uses profiles to support her view of the brain-boosting impact of motherhood. Almost exclusively, these stories focus on highly successful professional women, many of whom engaged in major career downsizing after having children. There are a couple of examples of less privileged women who demonstrate “mommy brain,” but there is no discussion at all of women who may not benefit from motherhood and the ensuing negative outcomes that they and their offspring face. Animal and human studies clearly indicate that maternal stress or social disadvantage, such as alcoholism or a lack of resources, can have negative neurophysiological impacts on both mother and child (for a review of prenatal stress impacts, see Ruiz and Avant, 2005).

Without a discussion of how socially and economically excluded mothers might be frustrated and stressed by mothering—and how these experiences can actually negate the neurological benefits of motherhood—*The Mommy Brain* stands as another well-written book helping middle-class women justify their decision to have children. However, Ellison does a solid job of summarizing the science behind her position, and I would highly recommend reading the book to gain insight into this fascinating area of research.

Parenting and Professing: Balancing Family Work with an Academic Career

Rachel Hile Bassett.
Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005.

Reviewed by Jenn Stephenson

Taking up this book while on maternity leave and reading it in small bursts while the babies napped, I was dismayed, comforted, and galvanized by the voices in this essay collection. As its central theme, *Parenting and Professing* considers the problem of the perceived value of “ideal-worker behaviour” in two seemingly irreconcilable fields—a value which creates a zero-sum equation pitting the all-consuming experience of being a parent against the equally all-consuming vocation of being a professor. In the first worrying section “Challenges,” several writers confront the practical need to improve the system with more and better family-friendly policies, like paid parental leave and affordable campus daycare, to reduce the tension between these competing roles. But the majority of contributors are more concerned with the intangible yet ingrained cultural attitudes towards mothers in academia.

Some of these tales are surprising in their unpleasantness. Kathryn Jacobs, Gale Walden, and Tarshia L. Stanley, for example, narrate their early struggles and the anti-child biases they encountered. However, each narrative ends on a hopeful note as the writers envision the future they desire. Still on the job search, Walden encounters a website picturing the department chair with her ten-year-old, “and I know immediately to apply. She isn’t hiding her child” (81). Stanley likewise sees a male colleague at work calmly smiling at his little boy in tow: “I am jealous.... It’s definitely what I want to look like when I’m working” (88).

This tenor of hopefulness continues into the second comforting section. Contributors address the benefits that mother/professors and their children might receive from full engagement in both academic and mothering spheres. In the essay “Elemental MoThEr,” chemist Michelle M. Francl-Donnay asks the question, “Can, and does, parenting shape my scholarship?” (122). She observes that “sometimes the most interesting thing in a web is not the spider but the detritus entangled in it” (129). Encouraged by her children to see with their eyes, she is granted a new perspective on her work, arriving at a specific revelation about atomic structures by making cut-out molecules like paper dolls: “Parenting thus feeds my scholarly life in much the same way as a colleague’s artistic work feeds his scholarship in aesthetics” (129). Other writers connect parenting experiences directly to successful research on topics such as the mother-artist in literature and killifish embryos. “Possibilities” also addresses some unconventional strategies for blending the demanding realms of

parenting and professing and perhaps thinking outside the box of a full-time tenure-track job and traditional home life.

The final galvanizing section focuses on the potential for significant cultural change by making parenting more visible, encouraging mothers to stop “hiding the baby,” but also aiming to extend the visible constituency of academics involved in parenting to encompass fathers, student-parents, step-parents, foster parents and other caregivers such as those caring for an aging parent, an ill partner, or friend. As Bassett suggests recounting the stories of academic mothers will provide “a deeper context, a sociological imagination that sees the political in the personal, the communal in the private” (12). And so this collection inspires me, effectively practising what it preaches by using first-person storytelling to change the value system underpinning academic culture as a whole to make it less “greedy” in the interests of achieving work-family balance for all its citizens.

The Development and Treatment of Girlhood Aggression

Debra J. Pepler, Kirsten C. Madsen, Christopher Webster, Kathryn S. Levene, eds.
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005.

Reviewed by Barbara Schwartz-Bechet

Typically, scientific research related to humans is conducted on males and the results of the research are translated to the female population. To counter this practice, *The Development and Treatment of Girlhood Aggression* provides insight into the most current—although limited—empirical research that studies girlhood aggression. Comparative research between male and female youth is presented alongside research conducted solely on females. The text serves a dual purpose as an exemplary resource for empirical data and as a treatment protocol. It studies the origins of girlhood aggression and progresses toward a continuum of possible treatment methods.

Several central ideas are presented in the five parts of the text. The editors’ first goal is to provide a resource for current empirical research. Their second goal is to identify key components in the identification and treatment of aggression in girls, and their third goal is to encourage further research in the field. A central theme running throughout the text is the importance of relationships and family in the context of girlhood aggression. Each chapter,

written by an expert on the topic under discussion, provides empirical data presented in professional but understandable language. An excellent feature of the text is the summarizing commentary that concludes each section.

Chapters one and two provide a thorough introduction to aggressive disorders in girls. Chapters three and four, through the description of longitudinal empirical studies, discuss physical aggression demonstrated by girls. Chapters five and six focus on social environment in the context of aggression in young girls and the variables associated with aggression in relationship development. Chapters seven and eight, through a description of qualitative and quantitative studies and their outcomes, address treatment methodologies. Chapters nine and ten look at risk factors in the design of treatment initiatives identified through longitudinal studies, with heavy emphasis placed on society and family and the impact of aberrant maternal behaviours. The relational aspect of female development and the treatment of female aggression differ significantly from male development and the treatment of male aggression.

The Development and Treatment of Girlhood Aggression offers practical research and content on a topic in need of further study. A valuable resource, it should encourage research and treatment in this field. The book will be useful in graduate courses in psychology, social work, and related fields of study.

A Donor Insemination Guide: Written by and for Lesbian Women

Marie Mohler and Lacy Frazer.
San Francisco: Harrington Park Press, 2002.

Reviewed by Lori Ross

In *A Donor Insemination Guide*, Marie Mohler and Lacy Frazer draw on their personal experiences conceiving their two sons to develop a practical, hands-on guide for lesbians on the path to parenthood. The authors offer concise, straightforward information about all aspects of the donor insemination process.

Being so deeply grounded in the authors' own experience is both this book's greatest advantage, and its greatest disadvantage. Having successfully conceived twice using donor insemination, Mohler and Frazer are experts on the topic. This comes across throughout the book: they highlight information they found helpful or wish they had known as they were going through the process—information that other lesbians may find difficult to access elsewhere. The book is both practical and encouraging of queer women who are exploring

the possibility of donor insemination.

The disadvantage of basing the book so completely on their own experiences is felt, however, in the authors' discussion of the "known versus unknown donor" question. Although at one point in their journey the authors attempted insemination using a known donor, they decided to use unknown donors for both of their children. As a result, they are strongly biased in favour of unknown donors and emphasize the potential complications—to the exclusion of potential benefits—associated with known donors. Important topics related to the use of known donors are not covered in the book, such as how to find, choose, and negotiate with potential known donors. There is also little discussion of the potential for creating alternative families beyond the two-parent model. The four interviews included in chapter seven, for example, are with committed couples who opt for insemination with an unknown donor via a sperm bank. The racial identity of neither the authors nor the interview subjects is mentioned, and important race-related issues (for example, the difficulties in accessing sperm from a donor who shares your heritage) are not addressed here.

Despite these limitations, this is a useful book that I recommend to other lesbians who are considering donor insemination, and especially those who intend to use an unknown donor. In particular, the introductory chapters on sperm, cycle monitoring, and insemination contain practical and accessible information that will help queer women successfully navigate the fertility system.

The Ultimate Guide to Pregnancy for Lesbians

Rachel Pepper.

San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2005.

Reviewed by Chloë Brushwood Rose

As a recently pregnant and new lesbian mother, I was interested to read the revised edition of Rachel Pepper's *The Ultimate Guide to Pregnancy for Lesbians* to see what kind of advice and insight I might have missed along my own strange journey toward parenthood. In many ways, this book is geared toward women like me—I am a lesbian who was economically privileged enough to secure good legal advice, buy sperm, and save \$5,000 to cover the cost of conception and childbirth that Pepper recommends. While Pepper addresses women in a variety of personal situations—single, coupled, members of alternative families—the first few chapters of the "ultimate guide" are not especially useful to poor or working-class lesbians or for queer women and lesbians who find themselves pregnant unexpectedly (more than one might think).

Having said that, Pepper does offer a thoughtful and practical guide to the experience of conception and pregnancy. Her writing is clear, concise, and honest. In this way, Pepper's guide stands in contrast to the kind of hyperbole usually reserved for soon-to-be or new mothers—including both the unerringly rose-coloured accounts of pregnancy and motherhood that make us feel like we must be doing something wrong and the dire warnings that make us wonder why we would want to have children at all—and the overwhelming focus on the fetus's health and development which can obscure the mother's need for insight into her own rich and challenging experience.

Of particular note is chapter five, which offers “ten tips to keep you sane” while trying to conceive, and chapter six, which tries to address the question “why am I not pregnant yet?” While there are the stories we cling to (and later resent) about the friend who got pregnant on her first try, for most women pregnancy rarely comes that easily. A book that openly discusses this issue and offers some wonderfully simple coping strategies is rarer still. As Pepper herself writes, “I lived in gay mecca, San Francisco, when I was trying to conceive, and I'm a pretty well-connected person. But I still felt as though I was reinventing the wheel every menstrual cycle.” Pepper is honest without being confessional and her company would have made my own journey toward parenthood much less strange and lonely.

The last half of Pepper's book addresses the experiences of pregnancy and birth. In these chapters, Pepper speaks directly to the mother's experience of her changing body and needs. This is what makes Pepper's the ultimate guide to pregnancy for lesbians: her ability to speak frankly to other lesbian moms, not as an expert or medical professional concerned primarily with “the baby,” but as a peer. This is a book that reduces the stress of pregnancy, keeps you company on the journey toward parenthood, and reminds you that your biggest challenges are shared by others.

Like Our Very Own: Adoption and the Changing Culture of Motherhood, 1851-1950

Julie Berebitsky.

Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000.

Reviewed by Amy Cuomo

The history of adoption in the United States is an expansive topic that might have daunted a less able historian; however, Julie Berebitsky tightly focuses

her historical lens and offers a carefully wrought picture of the changing ideology that surrounded adoption in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The author summarizes her book's purpose as follows: "Rather than providing a historical survey of adoption practices, this work examines adoption for what it can tell us about Americans' changing understanding of the family." Berebitsky does, however, provide an excellent overview of adoption practices. The author's historical research is meticulous, ranging across records from orphanages, social workers' case files, and correspondence from prospective parents, as well as those relinquishing a child for adoption. Problems of closed records required the author to search for additional material to help her understand the meaning of adoption; as a result Berebitsky also considers material found in popular magazines of the day.

Berebitsky analyzes the United States's changing perspective on adopted children, adoptive parents, and what these changes reveal about cultural understandings of family. Chapter one explores the foundations of early adoption laws and takes the reader through the early history of American adoption, using specific case studies of orphanages such as the Washington City Orphan Asylum and the Board of Children's Guardians. Photographs of adoption contracts and orphanages are included and offer a historical backdrop to adoption in the nineteenth century. In addition to developing a legal analysis of early adoption procedures in the U.S., the author considers eugenic concerns regarding "tainted blood." Berebitsky further notes that while many parents legally adopted their children, others chose to raise children without adopting them because they were daunted not only by the legal quagmire attached to adoption but also by its cost. Thus, the author explores cultural attitudes that questioned the ability of the law to constitute a family. Chapter two looks specifically at an adoption campaign launched by *The Delineator*, a popular magazine, and reveals how the campaign managed an early media spin that constructed a narrative aimed at "rescuing" children through adoption. Berebitsky's exploration of *The Delineator* campaign shows how the media affected the public perception of adoption.

In her third chapter, Berebitsky studies the cultural stigma of childlessness in the first half of the twentieth century and the growing concept of what constituted a "real mother." The author notes the contradiction that women who adopted children, while often denied the "status" of biological mothers, could be considered "superior citizens." Chapter four depicts the growing prejudice against single mothers who wished to adopt and notes that this change of attitude became pervasive by the 1940s. The author summarizes her research succinctly: "Single women still adopted after 1920; however, there was no longer popular support for their motherhood. And by the 1950s, it appears that virtually no single women adopted." Chapter five looks at the dispute between public adoption agencies that employed social workers and philanthropic women who worked with private adoption agencies to find homes for children. Berebitsky's study reveals that "[t]hroughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the demand for children greatly exceeded the supply of adoptable

infants.” This demand for infants also spurred social workers to expand the parameters of their notion of “adoptable infants.”

The epilogue notes current debates surrounding the institution of adoption. Berebitsky cites the fear of racial genocide expressed by the National Association of Black Social workers who tried to prevent whites from adopting black children. The author also recognizes the effect of *Roe v. Wade* on adoption, as there are now fewer available children to be adopted.

Like Our Very Own is clear, accessible, and painstakingly researched. It will appeal to readers interested in the history of the family and adoption.

The Family Context of Parenting in Children’s Adaptation to Elementary School

P. A. Cowen, C. A. Cowen, J. C. Ablow, V. K. Johnson, J. R. Measelle, eds.
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005.

Reviewed by Irene A. Barrett

The importance of understanding children’s education from a holistic standpoint is a recognized topic within educational training and research. Children’s experiences both in and out of the classroom are now considered in relation to their academic success. *The Family Context of Parenting in Children’s Adaptation to Elementary School* is an in-depth study exploring the significance of family experiences on a child’s transition to elementary school.

This book examines seven themes within the family context: authoritative parenting; marital quality in relation to sex-typed parenting; children’s self-perceptions; parental conflict; intergenerational context of parenting; parental work experience; and family process/structure. As a longitudinal study, the researchers were able to use multiple data gathering methods; thus, not only were the seven themes explored over time, the researchers witnessed gradual changes within the family contexts. The researchers also include voices of parents, children, teachers, and research observers who offer their points of view throughout the study.

I was troubled by the researchers’ noted population bias. For the purposes of this work, they recruited two-income, heterosexual, married couples whose first child was entering kindergarten during the time of study. Eighty-four percent of participants were Caucasian and 79% were equal to or above the median family income for the research region. The researchers targeted a population that was not “high-risk” and where the child’s experiences of school transition were at par with normal child development.

Given the sample population, the researchers’ findings come as no surprise

to this reviewer. It was found, for example, that mothers who had control over their work schedule and autonomy in their position had children who were considered more academically competent by their kindergarten teachers. The researchers further found that “regardless of the number of hours fathers work outside the home, their psychological investment in their work may have potential benefits for their children’s development and their life as a family” (248).

I question the value of these findings for many North American families. First, these results are aligned with the social belief that a mother’s first priority is her family. Second, this “ideal” scenario only seems possible for families that are financially secure. Finally, and most importantly, these findings reinforce traditional gender roles, where the father’s main contribution is his ability to provide for the family and the mother’s is to be accessible to her children for nurturance.

Especially useful are the four recommendations presented in the “integration” section of the text. First, the researchers confirm that it is possible to identify children at risk for academic and social problems. Second, they enumerate important opportunities for preventative intervention with families around the transition to elementary school. Third, they argue that study of low-income populations is needed. Finally, they recommend increased family-based interventions. Although there is preventative support in place for families who are “high risk,” little to no research has been conducted to determine its efficacy. Moreover, these supports are not readily available to the general public. The researchers argue for the need to understand the already implemented supports so that they can be extended to all families.

This work encourages further quantitative research in the field. As a scholarly work, however, it will not appeal to practitioners or the general public.

Losing a Life: A Daughter’s Memoir of Caregiving

Nancy Gerber.

Lanham, Maryland: Hamilton Books, 2005.

Reviewed by Gail M. Lindsay

Nancy Gerber says *Losing a Life* is the story of her father’s stroke and the intervening six years prior to his death in 2001. I would argue that it is equally the story of a father and daughter, of a daughter’s struggle to grow up, and of one family’s experience of the American health care system. In fact, there seem to be many lives lost.

As an academic, Gerber turns her family experience into a book that

she intends as a public service. Gerber reflects on her father's unanticipated stroke, the immediate changes in all relationships within the family, and the socio-economic implications of homecare. She thinks out loud about how "we have no prayers or rituals for the death of someone who hasn't died" (3). She calls herself a dutiful daughter and documents the struggle to be a wife, parent, doctoral student, sister, daughter, and individual whose consciousness is awakened as the *paterfamilias* becomes dependent on others. The book probes two key questions: What occurs when an adult daughter's already full life must suddenly accommodate an ill father and concern for her caregiving mother? How does the daughter sustain her own life when her primary relationships, at least temporarily, are with her parents?

What stands out for this reader is how Gerber weaves her father's history as a German Jew and an American immigrant into the story of his stroke and its impact on her mother. Her father is assaulted, first by the stroke and then by the health care system. In her description of the aftermath of the stroke, Gerber embeds the story of her mother's day-to-day life. But Gerber's relationship with her mother is not developed in this book. Rather, she shows a father who is self-determined at the expense of his wife, and a daughter who is torn in two and living a paradox, a disjunction; Gerber "can't find the words to describe my feelings. Ordinary language is not sufficient" (50).

Gerber admits that she feels responsible for and compelled to care for her father, but she also acknowledges her naiveté and that she is configured as the heroine of the story she writes. Based on Ray's definition of caregiving as "an activity that involves intimacy and connection, in which care is given freely," Gerber identifies herself as a caregiver. I am unconvinced, however, that Gerber actually fits the definition. As her book shows through wrenching examples, care for her father is necessary, required, and urgent, but women are not always in a position to give it freely.

Giovanna's 86 Circles and Other Stories

Paola Corso.

Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

Reviewed by Roxanne Harde

Award-winning poet Paola Corso's first collection of short fiction offers a variety of feminine perspectives from different life stages. Set in working-class Italian neighbourhoods in the Pittsburgh area, the ten stories are narrated by a variety of women and girls who offer views of the ordinary with occasional dashes of magical realism. The volume begins and ends with narratives by

middle-aged women about their mothers. In the first, “Yesterday’s News,” a woman mourns her mother with the help of a wildly eccentric thrift-shop owner. “Roman Arches,” the final story, is just as sharply imaginative as the protagonist returns home for a Christmas visit to find that her aging mother, always obsessed with Lucille Ball, now believes she is Lucy Ricardo. Arabella blends her memories of her mother with her mother’s stories of her Italian village, all interspersed with her mother acting out episodes from *I Love Lucy*. Both stories, like so many others in the book, invoke questions about mother-daughter relationships, their emotional investments and responsibilities.

While the book is being marketed to adults, the many child and teenage voices in this collection and the accessibility of the writing make it equally appealing to a young adult audience. Girls and young women are the narrators of stories that investigate a variety of female relationships: between mothers and daughters, friends, co-workers, granddaughters and their “Nonnas,” and sisters. The sister stories are especially powerful. In “Unraveled,” Renata examines the paradox of her teenage sister’s unwanted pregnancy and their neighbour’s inability to conceive a child that her whole family wants. In “Freezer Burn,” Charlene resurrects a ball of ancient starter dough for the sake of her sister. The original dough came from Sicily with their great-grandmother; Charlene’s ability to make this dough rise will ensure her sister’s success. In both stories, a little unpredictable domestic magic comes into play, and pain and pathos are tempered by positive outcomes. Other stories examine sexual tensions and feminine magic: in “Between the Sheets,” the heat and steam of a hospital laundry turn a teenage girl into a prophet, and female nature reclaims her own in a startling episode from the title story.

Overall, these are enjoyable narratives, compelling, often profound, sometimes poetic. Corso’s strength lies in her ability to combine the mundane and the magical and make them immediate, almost tangible, to the reader. However, while her descriptive narration is first-rate, detailed but cogent, Corso’s dialogue is too often awkward and unnatural. For example, when the sisters in “Freezer Burn” narrate family histories, they draw the reader into their stories, as do the voices of Corso’s third- and first-person speakers. But when the sisters engage in conversation, and especially argument, the stilted dialogue cuts short a reader’s engagement with the story. While Corso’s dialogue sometimes disappoints, her poetic talent shines through in narration that combines with remarkable concision sharp observations of everyday life and philosophical questions about what that means for girls and women. Overall, this is an excellent fiction for girls and women of all ages.

Family Reunion: Poems About Parenting Grown Children

Sondra Zeidenstein, ed.
Goshen, Connecticut: Chicory Blue Press, 2003.

Reviewed by Marion Gold

As parents, we sometimes celebrate our children's achievements as if they were our own. That privilege of ownership is withdrawn, however, when our children reach adulthood and their successes and failures belong to them. In fact, the parent-adult child relationship can be difficult. Often adult children misinterpret our best parenting practices, or do not appreciate our thoughtful parenting; sometimes parents go astray and become the enemy. Not everyone who reaches adulthood can say with equanimity, as Gloria Steinem declares in her memoirs, that as long as parents are not deliberately harming their children, they should be forgiven for their behaviour. In truth, the connection between parents and adult children is based upon memories of past experiences that, over time, are restructured.

Sondra Zeidenstein, editor of *Family Reunion: Poems About Parenting Grown Children*, has done parents of adult daughters and sons a great service in offering us a forum in which to engage our thoughts on the evolving nature of our relationships. Many of us already enmeshed in the complex web of adult-to-adult child love and friendship have discovered that the path toward mutual acceptance is fraught with the distortion of the past. Within the pages of *Family Reunion* we can engage in dialogue with many poets and perhaps ease our angst over perceived injustices. Here we read Myra Patterson's words in "Mother's Day, no children," for example. Patterson writes: "Truth is, my kids are living their lives, all grown. I have only to sit, to walk, to lie down, to eat fresh strawberries, breathe, love, and let go." We all should try to let go graciously, in fact.

In her introductory remarks entitled "Notes toward a Conversation in Poetry," Zeidenstein admits that she has always learned much about herself through literature, and especially through poetry. She poses questions in these "Notes": "Why shouldn't I expect to find poems that express the extraordinary sorrow and rage I felt when my daughter was finally determined to separate from me? Are there so few poets, particularly women, with adult children? Are so few of us moved to write about these relationships, these emotions?"

Parents engage in conversation with others from time to time, exchange confidences usually on a one-to-one basis, and often feel isolated and inadequate, particularly during the formative years of our children's lives. It is not surprising, then, that we are even more reticent to discuss the quality of our relationships with our adult daughters and sons. *Family Reunion*, however, can inspire us to muse, to discuss in groups, and to write poetry about the multiplicity of emotions

that refract from a parent's heart to an adult child and back again.

Letters to Virginia Woolf

Lisa Williams.
Lanham, MD: Hamilton, 2005.

Reviewed by Roxanne Harde

In *Letters to Virginia Woolf*, a non-fiction work of 43 letters, Woolf scholar Lisa Williams focuses on mothering and violence and probes the significance of Woolf's life and writing. Williams is at her best in those letters that describe birthing and raising her son, the miscarriages she suffered before having him, and the fertility treatments she underwent in order to conceive. Her experience of mothering gives her a deeper understanding of and appreciation for her own mother. When describing great joy or great pain, Williams's prose is eloquent and direct; her first letter moves from a sunny fall day with her son in a New York City park to the devastating events that happened that very day, 11 September 2001. This letter opens with a quotation from Woolf, as do several letters, and Woolf's rumination on war and life from *Three Guineas* inspires Williams even as it enriches her insight into her own responses to the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. The last letters circle back to where the book begins as they discuss the first anniversary of what we now know as 9-11 and draw from Woolf's writings on war to make clear that Woolf, and Williams, are connected to history and life, disconnected from nationalism and war.

Letters to Virginia Woolf is not consistently successful, however. The letters are divided into six parts that do not cohere and the whole seems fragmented. Williams's ruminations—on 9-11, her body, and her child; her adolescence and the Vietnam War; her parents and their divorce; and her Woolf scholarship—cover a good deal of her life, and the divisions seem arbitrary and unenlightening. Further, I expected a scholar who has spent a good deal of her adulthood immersed in Woolf's writing to have more acuity with language. Woolf is generally a model of concision; Williams has a tendency to repeat images, words, and phrases, including clichés. How many times does one need to pause over a mother's beehive hairdo; how many times does one need to "revisit the landscape of my childhood"? Woolf's descriptions are cogent; Williams's prose is overwrought at times. A sun, for example, "seemed to stretch her arms languorously over hills and streams," and a mother's "hair splintered into many threads while the evening light hovered round her." When not weighted down with descriptions, Williams's prose soars and the two short poems she includes show a sharp acuity often lacking in this book. I will be sure to seek out her poetry on the strength of those poems alone.

Contributor Notes

Louise Adongo is a graduate student in Dalhousie University's Applied Health Services Research Program. She has worked on a number of projects looking at culture and health as well as community development. Her career interests include policy research that engages communities in addressing challenges experienced in accessing health and social services.

Meena Alexander's books of poetry include *Raw Silk* (2004), *Illiterate Heart*, winner of a 2002 PEN Open Book Award, and the forthcoming *Quickly Changing River* all published by TriQuarterly Books/ Northwestern University Press. She is the editor of *Indian Love Poems* (Everyman's Library/ Knopf, 2005) and of the memoir *Fault Lines* (Feminist Press 1993/ 2003). She is Distinguished Professor of English at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, CUNY.

Irene A. Barrett holds a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology. Her research interests focus on mothering within institutionalized social support systems, specifically focusing on mothers' experiences of mother-worker interactions. Irene is a Wellness Counsellor who specializes in gender issues, specifically in relationship enhancement, gendered violence, gender identity, and sexual identity topics.

Mary Kay Blakely joined the Journalism School faculty in September, 1997, and teaches Advanced Writing in the magazine sequence. A contributing editor to *Ms. Magazine* since 1981 and former "Hers" columnist for *The New York Times*, she is the author of the critically acclaimed *Wake Me When It's Over* and *American Mom*. Her essays on social and political issues have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Mother Jones*, *LIFE*, *Vogue*, *Family Circle*, *Self*, *Parents*, *Newsday*, *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, *Lear's*, *Glamour*, *Working Woman* as well as other national publications. Her work has been collected in fourteen writing anthologies and published in Australia, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and Japan. Blakely is on the National Advisory Board for *Women's Enews*, the National Writer's Union and MOMbo, a syndicated radio program. Her television appearances

include news commentaries on the *Today Show*, *Oprah*, *Larry King Live*, *CBS This Morning*, *Charlie Rose*, *C-SPAN*, *Good Morning America*, *CNN* and other news programs.

Heidi M. Berggren's primary research and teaching interests are gender and social policy, women and politics, social movements and political behaviour. She has published articles in a variety of journals, including *Political Research Quarterly*, the *Review of Policy Research*, as well as book chapters. Currently, she is researching potential sources of change in gender-role attitudes among European men. She regularly teaches Women and Public Policy, Sex Roles and Politics, Women and Politics, Politics of Welfare Reform, and Introduction to Women's Studies.

Cyndi Brannen, is a Psychologist, Adjunct Professor in the Departments of Health and Human Performance and Psychology, Dalhousie University and Research Associate for the Centre for Research on Family Health at IWK Health Centre in Halifax. Dr. Brannen's research focus is on unpaid caregiving, stress, and family health.

Stacey L. Brown, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Medicine and Director of the Community-Based Education Program at the University of Connecticut, School of Medicine. She earned her doctorate in Sociology from Kent State University. Her interests are social stratification, cross-cultural skills and health equity.

Deidre Hill Butler is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Union College in Schenectady, New York (USA). Professor Hill Butler's academic research focuses, in part, on the role of African American women within contemporary stepfamilies. Professor Hill Butler authored a forthcoming article titled "The South Side Community Center of Ithaca, New York: Built through Community Mothering, 1938" for *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*. She recently guest edited an edition of *The Journal of Pan African Studies* (JPAS) issue on Africana Mothering: "Shifting Roles and Emerging Contradictions." This issue explores mothering throughout the African Diaspora with articles examining the social, historical, and cultural constructions of mothering, mothering roles, ideologies, and motivations. Deidre Hill Butler is the birth mother of two sons and stepmother to four young adults.

Roshaunda D. Cade is a Ph.D. student in English at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, MO, where she has taught in the English Department and in the African American Studies Program. She currently teaches English Composition at Missouri Baptist University in St. Louis, MO. Her work primarily focuses on race manipulation and gender and how they affect American citizenship.

Mirna Carranza works as an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, McMaster University. She is a Social Worker and a Registered Marriage and Family Therapist. She is a clinical member of AAMFT and a member of AFTA. Mirna's research interests include immigrant and refugee families and their process of acculturation as family units. She is also interested in studying issues of grief, war and trauma, the development and maintenance of transnational relationships, and the impact of these on parenting practices, addictive behaviours, and mental health. Specifically, looking at the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation and the context in which families settle and its impact on "successful" or "non-successful acculturation" is a focus of her studies. Her theoretical standpoint is a liberationist perspective with strong commitment to social justice and human right issues.

Lisa Comeau is Research Associate with the Centre for Social Justice and Anti-Oppressive Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Regina. Dr. Comeau teaches courses in anti-racist and cross-cultural education for the Faculty of Education, University of Regina, and the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP).

Amy Cuomo, Assistant Professor at the University of West Georgia, teaches Images of Women on Stage and Screen, Theatre History, and Screenwriting. In addition to teaching and directing, she and her colleague J. Caleb Boyd write "All the World's a Stage" a recurring column in *Southern Theatre Magazine* that explores non-traditional jobs for theatre students.

Patrice DiQuinzio is Professor of Philosophy and Director of Women's Studies at Muhlenberg College. Before that Patrice served as Assistant Dean of the Undergraduate College at Bryn Mawr College, and Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Scranton. She has published a number of articles on feminism and political philosophy and has edited two collections of work on women, ethics, social theory, and public policy. Patrice has also published a book on the difficulties that feminist thinkers have encountered in their attempts to develop theories of femininity, women's oppression, and women's liberation that adequately address the topic of motherhood. Patrice is also a member of the board of trustees of the National Association of Mothers' Centers, headquartered in Levittown, New York. Her books include: *Women and Children First: Feminism, Rhetoric, and Public Policy*; *The Impossibility of Motherhood: Feminism, Individualism, and the Problem of Mothering*; and *Feminist Ethics and Social Policy*.

Rishma Dunlop is the author of three acclaimed books of poetry, *Metropolis* (Mansfield Press, 2005), *Reading Like a Girl* (Black Moss Press, 2004), and *The Body of My Garden* (Mansfield Press, 2002). Books as editor include:

White Ink: Poems on Mothers and Motherhood (Demeter Press, 2007) and *Red Silk: An Anthology of South Asian Canadian Women Poets* (Mansfield Press, 2004). She received the Emily Dickinson Prize for Poetry in 2003, and her radio drama, “The Raj Kumari’s Lullaby,” was commissioned and produced by CBC Radio in 2005. Her poems have won numerous awards and have appeared in journals including *Blackbird*, *Canadian Literature*, *Descant*, *Event*, *Grain*, *Literary Review of Canada*, *CV2*, *Room of One’s Own*, and *The Comstock Review*. She is editor of *Studio*, an online international poetry journal, and literary editor of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. She is a professor in the Department of English at York University, Toronto, where she is Coordinator of the Creative Writing Program in English.

Sonya Corbin Dwyer is an Associate Professor in Psychology at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College campus. Her research interests include transracial adoption, identity development, experiences of labels, and women and education. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Calgary in School and Community Psychology.

Miriam Edelson is a social activist, mother and writer living in Toronto. *Battle Cries: Justice For Kids with Special Needs* was published in 2005. *My Journey With Jake: A Memoir of Parenting and Disability* appeared in 2000. Her creative non-fiction and commentaries have appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, CBC Radio, *This Magazine* as well as other periodicals. Born in New York, Edelson spent her teens in Toronto and completed her undergraduate studies at McMaster and Laval Universities. After joining the staff of a national union based in Ottawa, she completed her Masters in political science at Carleton University. She is fluent in French and is currently pursuing doctoral studies in sociology and bioethics part-time at the University of Toronto. Edelson lives in Toronto with her partner Andy King and her daughter Emma.

Kerri Embrey is a teacher in a Reggio-inspired kindergarten class. While living in Bangkok for three years, she had the opportunity to explore many parts of South East Asia, India and Nepal. She is completing a Master’s in Education at York University and lives in Toronto with her husband and her son Julian.

Josephine Etowa is an Associate Professor of Nursing at Dalhousie University and a founding member, and past president, of the Health Association of African Canadians. As a midwife, a lactation consultant, a nurse and an educator, Dr Etowa has worked in various capacities within the Canadian and Nigerian health care systems.

Shell Feijo is an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. candidate at the University of Iowa.

Previously published in *Motherverse*, and in *Without a Net: The Female Experience Growing Up Working Class*, edited by Michelle Tea, Feijo is a writer stealing time while a mother of three children ranging in age from two years old to 21 years old.

Lingqin Feng is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education of Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the University of Toronto. Her research interest includes gender, family, inequality, and social development. Presently, she is working on her doctoral dissertation entitled *Effects of Policy Shifts on Marital Relations in a Rural Chinese Village*.

Lynn Gidluck is Director of the Saskatchewan office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Together with her partner, she also owns and operates a public relations firm in Regina, Saskatchewan. She received her M.A. from the University of Regina.

Marion Gold studies focus on the reality that personal life as wife, mother, daughter, grandmother, and great grandmother serve as a template for professional life as teacher, graduate student and life-long learner within the walls of the academy. She tells and retells narratives of lived experiences as an educator and researcher. In the process, she revises the aging process and explores the possibilities of empowerment through maturity.

Louise Gormley, Ph.D. (2006) OISE/UT has two sons with a Taiwanese/Canadian/Mexican heritage and thus, she is drawn to mothering research on the multiracial experience. Through her Mexican mother and her Canadian father, she also identifies as an individual of mixed heritage. Currently, she is an educational researcher in Mississauga, Canada.

Fiona J. Green, Chair, Women's and Gender Studies Department at the University of Winnipeg, has published research on feminist mothering in the journals *Socialist Studies* and the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, and in the edited volumes, *Mother Outlaws* and *Motherhood to Mothering*. More recent/forthcoming publications addressing reality TV representations of mothers are in the journal *Storytelling* and the book *Mediated Moms: Mothering and Popular Culture*.

Roxanne Harde is an assistant professor of English at the University of Alberta—Augustana. She researches American women's writing using approaches from feminist cultural studies. Her work has appeared in several journals, including *Christianity and Literature*, *Legacy*, *Studies in Puritan American Spirituality*, *Critique*, *Feminist Theology*, and *Mosaic*, and in several edited collections.

Eugene Hynes is Associate Professor of Sociology at Kettering University, Flint, Michigan. His dissertation was on class differences in families in Dublin, Ireland. He has published articles on community power, explanations of class differences in parents' values and behaviours, Durkheim's *Suicide*, and other topics. His book on changes in nineteenth century Irish Catholicism is forthcoming.

D. Memee Lavell-Harvard is currently President of the Ontario Native Women's Association, a full time student currently completing her Ph.D. in Education at the University of Western Ontario, and is the first Aboriginal person ever to receive a Trudeau Scholarship. Harvard is also a full-time mother of two little girls, Autumn Sky (eight years) and Eva Lillie (two years). Ms. Lavell-Harvard's research addresses the epidemic of low academic achievement and high drop out rates among Aboriginal populations in Canada.

Carl Leggo is a poet and professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia where he teaches courses in English language arts education, writing, and narrative research. His poetry and fiction and scholarly essays have been published in many journals in North America and around the world. He is the author of three collections of poems: *Growing Up Perpendicular on the Side of a Hill*, *View from My Mother's House* (Killick Press, St. John's), and *Come-By-Chance* (Breakwater Books, St. John's), as well as a book about reading and teaching poetry: *Teaching to Wonder: Responding to Poetry in the Secondary Classroom* (Pacific Educational Press, Vancouver). Also, he is a co-editor (with Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin, and Peter Gouzouasis) of *Being with A/r/tography* (Sense Publishers, Rotterdam).

Gail M. Lindsay, RN, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, at UOIT. Her research program narratively explores teaching-learning experience of nursing students & teachers and also patterns of health experience between clinicians and persons receiving nursing care. Considerations of autobiography and social situation inform identity and knowledge construction in her work.

Laura Major recently completed her Ph.D. at Bar Ilan University in Israel on The Re-imagination of the Pregnant and Birthing Self in Contemporary Women's Poetry. Her research interests include maternal subjectivity, maternal narratives, religious poetry, and pedagogy. Currently Laura resides in Israel with her husband and four children, and works as a teacher, editor and writer.

Brenda F. McGadney-Douglass received her Ph.D. from the University of

Chicago, Chicago, Illinois and both undergraduate and graduate from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her career in applied social work practice, education, research, and academic administration spans three decades in the United States, Canada, and Ghana and other West African countries. She has focused the majority of her research and teaching on applied gerontology, international social work, health care for the poor and underserved, and the international legal and social issues of refugees and asylum-seekers, generally related to social justice for women and children. Her field research in Ghana began in 1999 and has been continuous to the present time with field data collection in 1999, 2001/02 and 2005. She served as Visiting Scholar at the University of Ghana in 2001-2002, and taught again at the Legon campus in 2005. Currently, she is preparing to be the external evaluator of a two-year active citizenship and civic empowerment social transformation project headed up by a colleagues at Bowling Green State University and Centre for Community and Educational Development for marginalized Blacks women and youth in South Africa.

Delores V. Mullings is pursuing doctoral studies at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario Canada; has been an unpartnered parent for more than 18 years and a foster parent for almost four years. Delores is committed to issues of social justice and advancing social work education, praxis and research through a critical race theory lens. Delores' area of study currently focuses on the health and social needs of older Caribbean women and employment equity exclusion specific to racialized women and men. Her other research interests include social policy analysis, social exclusion, income security, and racially/culturally inclusive social work education and practice. Delores continues to offer a safe and support home for foster children, the majority of whom are of European descent.

Andrea O'Reilly, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University, (Atkinson Faculty). She is co-editor/editor of more than ten books on motherhood, including *Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering* (Women's Press, 2004), and *Maternal Theory: The Essential Readings* (Demeter Press, 2007). O'Reilly is author of *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*, (SUNY, 2004) and *Rocking the Cradle: Thoughts on Motherhood, Feminism, and the Possibility of Empowered Mothering*, (Demeter Press, 2006). O'Reilly is founder and director of *The Association for Research on Mothering* (ARM), founder and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, and founder and editor of Demeter Press, the first feminist press on motherhood. She has received thirteen *Social Science Humanities Research Council of Canada* grants over the last ten years, including one for her current research project on "Being a Mother in the Academe." Dr. O'Reilly has presented her research at more than 50 conferences in over a dozen countries and was a keynote speaker at the *Na-*

tional Women's Studies Conference in 2006; as well she has been interviewed widely on the topic of motherhood. In 1998 she was the recipient of the University wide "Teacher of the Year" award at York University, and in 2007 she was granted the Atkinson Deans's award for "Outstanding Research." Andrea and her common-law spouse of twenty-five years are the parents of a 23-year-old son and two daughters, ages 18 and 21.

Ruth Panofsky is Book Review Editor of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. She is Associate Professor of English at Ryerson University in Toronto where she specializes in Canadian literature and culture. Her most recent books are *The Force of Vocation: The Literary Career of Adele Wiseman* (University of Manitoba Press, 2006) and *Laike and Nahum: A Poem in Two Voices* (Inanna Publications, 2007).

Sharron Proulx-Turner is a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta. She's from Mohawk, Algonquin, Wyandot, Ojibwe, Mi'kmaw, French and Irish ancestry. She's a two-spirit mum of three adult children, Graham, Barb and Adrian, mother-in-law to Harold, and nokomis to Willow, Jessinia and Mazie. Her previously published memoir, *Where the Rivers Join: A Personal Account of Healing from Ritual Abuse* (1995), written under the pseudonym Beckylane, was short-listed for the Edna Staebler award for creative non-fiction, and her second book, *what the auntys say* (2002), was shortlisted for the League of Canadian Poets' Gerald Lampert Prize for best first book of poetry. Sharron's work appears in several anthologies and journals. She has two upcoming books, *she walks for days/ inside a thousand eyes/ (a two-spirit story)* (Turnstone, 2008) and *she is reading her blanket with her hands (the dedication poems)* (Frontenac, 2008).

Joanna Radbord is a lesbian feminist mother and a lawyer with the firm of Epstein Cole, LLP. Her practice focuses on family law and gay and lesbian equality rights, and she is particularly interested in the legal regulation of lesbian mothering. Joanna was involved with *M. v. H.*, a Supreme Court of Canada decision resulting in the recognition of same-sex relationships in dozens of federal and provincial statutes. She was counsel to a lesbian father in *Forrester v. Saliba*, which states that transsexuality is irrelevant to a child's best interests. She has acted for the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund in cases involving the feminization of poverty, particularly the spousal support variation case Boston and the retroactive child support case DBS. She was co-counsel to the Ontario and Quebec same-sex couples who won the freedom to marry in Halpern and on the Reference re Same-Sex Marriage before the Supreme Court. Joanna also appeared as counsel in Rutherford, achieving immediate legal recognition for lesbian mothers, and represented the Rutherford families as intervener counsel in *A.A. v. B.B. v. C.C.*, the case allowing recognition of three parents in law.

Chloë Brushwood Rose is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at York University. Her current research examines women's multimedia stories of educational experience. Her scholarly and artistic work has appeared in several publications and, most recently, she is curator of a DVD compilation and study guide for Video Out in Vancouver, entitled *Gender Currents* (2007).

Rachel Rose is a dual Canadian/American citizen whose work has appeared in various journals in both countries, including *Poetry*, *The Malahat Review*, and *The Best American Poetry*, as well as in several anthologies, including *Uncharted Lines: Poems from the Journal of the American Medical Association* and *In Fine Form: The Canadian Book of Form Poetry*. Her first book, *Giving My Body to Science* (McGill/Queen's University Press), was a finalist for The Gerald Lampert Award, The Pat Lowther Award, and the Grand Prix du Livre de Montreal, and won the Quebec Writers' Federation A. M. Klein Award. Her second book, *Notes on Arrival and Departure*, was published by McClelland and Stewart in Spring 2005. In 2008, she will be the poetry mentor at Simon Fraser University's The Writer's Studio.

Lori Ross, Ph.D., is a Research Scientist in the Social Equity and Health Research Section, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and Academic Leader, Reproductive Life Stages Program, Women's College Hospital, Toronto. Her research focuses on women's reproductive mental health and health issues for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities.

Sara Ruddick lives in New York City where she taught for many years at New School University. Her most recent collection, *Mother Troubles*, co-edited with Julia Hanigsberg, a legal theorist who lives in Toronto, considers dilemmas of motherhood for which there are no easy answers. This book represents an early attempt to think about institutions and cultures of motherhood that might serve mothers well. In her first collection, *Working It Out*, published in 1976 and co-edited with Pamela Daniels, women wrote personal essays about their struggles doing their chosen work. This was followed by another collection of personal essays, *Between Women* edited with Carol Ascher and Louise de Salvo published in 1984 and later published in a second edition with an introduction by Carolyn Heilbrun. These essays, taken collectively, continued to tell the story of women's struggles doing work of their own, raised the issue of "objective" knowledge, and explored a then unexplored personal relationship between biographer or critic and their subject. During these years she began to think about mothers' thinking and in 1980, published the essay "Maternal Thinking" and, in 1989, the book *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, published with a new introduction in 1995. Throughout these years she has written steadily, though not copiously, about war, non-violence, maternal thinking, and the connections and contrasts between them. Two decades after promising that *Maternal Thinking* was at least connected

to a politics of peace she is still trying to create transformative understandings of mothering as a resource for non-violent practices, still trying to forge the links that would make thinking maternally a way of thinking against the grain of violence.

Cynthia E. Rudolph is an anthropologist and mother who dreams about being a full-time gardener. She has a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, and teaches at St. John's University. Her research has focused on subjective experiences of bulimia, on rural domestic violence, and on cultural constructions of mothering, race, and ethnicity.

Lori Saint-Martin is a professor in the literature department at the Université du Québec à Montréal. She has published two books of short fiction, *Lettre imaginaire à la femme de mon amant* (1991) and *Mon père, la nuit* (1999), French translations of six English-Canadian novels, in collaboration with Paul Gagné, and several books of non-fiction on women's writing in Québec, including *Le nom de la mère: Mères, filles et écriture dans la littérature québécoise au féminin* (*The Name of the Mother: Mothers, Daughters and Writing in Quebec Women's Fiction*), 1999. Her current research project is on fathers and children in contemporary Québec fiction (supported by SSHRC grant). With Paul Gagné, she has two children, Nicolas, born in 1993, and Anna, born in 1995.

Susan L. Schalge is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Minnesota State University, Mankato and a single mom. Her specializations include gender, urbanism, household economics, mothering cross-culturally, and Applied Anthropology. Her primary research focuses on women and labor in the squatter settlements of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Additionally, she is actively engaged in a variety of community-based research projects with African refugees in the Midwest.

Barbara Schwartz-Bechet, a mother and an Associate Professor of Graduate Special Education/Guidance and Counseling at Bowie State University/University System of Maryland, has been a special education parent advocate for over 20 years. Her research interests include mothers' advocating for their children with special needs, & athletic opportunities for children with special needs.

Judith Stadtman Tucker is a writer and activist. She is the founder and editor of the *Mothers Movement Online*, and a member of the NOW Mothers' and Caregivers' Economic Rights Committee. She previously served as co-coordinator for the May 2006 ARM Conference on Caregiving and Carework.

Jenn Stephenson is an assistant professor of Drama at Queen's University,

Kingston, Ontario. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto (2003). She has published in *Theatre Journal*, *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* and *Studies in Theatre and Performance*. Jenn is the editor of the Summer 2007 issue of CTR on the topic of Science, Technology and Theatre.

Karen Nelson Villanueva is a Doctoral Candidate at the California Institute of Integral Studies in Philosophy and Religion with a specialization in Women's Spirituality. She holds degrees from the University of Michigan, George Washington and Holy Names Universities. She currently lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her family.

Michelle Walks completed her Masters in Anthropology, focusing on "Queer Couples' Narratives of Birthing," at Simon Fraser University in early 2007. In autumn 2008, she will start her Ph.D. researching "Lesbian and Trans Narratives of Infertility." Michelle's journey into motherhood started in September 2007, with the birth of her son.

Nicole L. Willey is an assistant professor of English at Kent State University Tuscarawas. Her research interests and publications include readings of African American and sentimental literatures, focusing on issues of motherhood, parenting, and masculinity. She lives in New Philadelphia, Ohio, with her husband, son, and two cats.

Gina Wong-Wylie, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology at Athabasca University in Alberta, Canada. She is a Registered Psychologist and devotes her counselling practice to focusing on pre and postnatal issues with women. Gina's area of research interest also includes prenatal/perinatal psychology, issues related to mothering, and mental health and maternal wellness issues from feminist and cross-cultural perspectives.

Dawn Wright Williams is a researcher and part-time librarian employed at Georgia Perimeter College. She holds Master's degrees in African American Studies and Library and Information Studies from Clark Atlanta University. Among her research interests are oral histories with specific concerns that include grandmothers and grandmothering in the African Diaspora.

Zarina was born in India and has studied in India, Europe, and Japan. Her work has been shown widely and is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Victoria Albert Museum, London; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; and in the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. She lives and work in New York.

—Call for Papers—

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 10.2 of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* (ARM) to be published in Fall/Winter 2008.

The journal will explore the subject:

Mothers and Daughters

The Association for Research on Mothering's first conference in 1997 was on the topic of "Mothers and Daughters." As well, this topic was a central theme at ARM's tenth anniversary conference "The Motherlode" in 2006. The *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* has yet to do a journal issue on this important motherhood theme. Consequently, "Mothers and Daughters" is the theme for second issue of the journal's tenth volume. We invite submissions on the topic of "Mothers and Daughters" from a variety of perspectives and on a wide range of themes. Submissions from scholars, students, activists, artists, mothers, and others who work or research in this area are welcome. Cross-cultural, historical and comparative work is encouraged.

Submission guidelines:

Book reviews are to be no more than 2 pages (500 words).

Articles should be 15 pages (3750 words).

All should be MLA style.

Please see our guidelines for details:

<http://www.yorku.ca/arm/styleguide.html>

Deadline for submissions: May 1, 2008

To submit work, one must be a member of ARM.

<http://www.yorku.ca/arm/armmembership.html>

Please direct your submissions to:

Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)

726 Atkinson, York University

4700 Keele Street,

Toronto, ON M3J 1P3

Phone: 416.736.2100 x 60366 Email: arm@yorku.ca

Or visit our website at www.yorku.ca/arm

—Call for Papers—

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 11.1 of the
Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
to be published in Spring/Summer 2009.

The journal will explore the subject:

Maternal Health and Well-Being *(Physical, Psychological, Social, Economic, Sexual, Political and Spiritual Issues)*

The journal will explore the topic of Maternal Health and Well-Being from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. We welcome submissions from scholars, students, activists, health care professionals and other health workers, artists, mothers and others who work or research in this area. Cross-cultural, historical and comparative work is encouraged. We also welcome creative reflections such as poetry, short stories, and artwork on the subject.

Topics can include (but are not limited to):

- maternal health promotion and education; • globalization and maternal health; • maternal health activism; • reproductive justice; • public policy and maternal health; • the environment and maternal health issues; • mothers and healthy living; • maternal health and challenges within Indigenous communities; • mothers with disabilities; • mothers with illnesses; • HIV/AIDS; • breast cancer; • mental health issues; • postpartum depression; • disease prevention; • psychiatry; • psychology; • medicine; • pregnancy; • childbirth; • breastfeeding; • young mothers; • mothers and aging; • work and family balance; • maternal nutrition; • disordered eating; • mothering children with disabilities; • violence against mothers and children; • sexual abuse, healing through the arts; • addictions and recovery; • raising healthy children; • politics of reproduction; • abortion; • sterilization; • maternal sexuality; • maternal health promotion and education; • LGBT maternal health issues; • menstruation; • menopause; • mothers and the health professions; • representations/images of mothers and health/well-being issues.

Submission Guidelines

Book reviews are to be no more than 2 pages (500 words).

Articles should be 15 pages (3750 words).

All should be MLA style.

Please see our guidelines for details:

<http://www.yorku.ca/arm/styleguide.html>

Deadline for submissions: November 1, 2008

<http://www.yorku.ca/arm/armmembership.html>

Please direct your submissions to:

Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)

726 Atkinson, York University

4700 Keele Street,

Toronto, ON M3J 1P3

Phone: 416.736.2100 x 60366 Email: arm@yorku.ca

Or visit our website at www.yorku.ca/arm

Telephone: (416) 736-2100 x 60366

Fax: (416) 736-5766

Email: arm@yorku.ca

or visit our website at <http://www.yorku.ca/arm>

*To submit work, one must be a member of the
Association for Research on Mothering.*

—*Call for Papers*—

Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
12th Annual Conference!

Mothering, Violence, Militarism, War and Social Justice

October 24-26, 2008

We welcome submissions from scholars, students, activists, artists, NGOs, community agencies, service providers, journalists, mothers and others who work or research in this area. Cross-cultural, historical, and comparative work is encouraged. We encourage a variety of types of submissions including academic papers from all disciplines, workshops, creative submissions, performances, storytelling, visual arts, and other alternative formats.

Topics can include (but are not limited to):

Nationalism, militarism, and motherhood; violence against mothers and children; mothers and war across history and culture; motherhood and terrorism; mothers and human rights; peace building and peace/anti-militarism activism by mothers; peace keeping strategies of mothers; mothers against militarism; marriage, motherhood, and pregnancy in the military; Maternal Thinking; the Ethics of Care/the Politics of Peace; women writers and the critique of war; rhetoric of masculinity and violence against mothers; teaching social justice in the classroom as mothering for peace; educating children about war; parenting in war; teaching non-violence to children; mothers' roles in post-conflict reconstruction; state violence against mothers; racism, ethnicity, and peace; impact of prolific small arms and light weapons on women; female suicide-bombers; women's contributions to (formal) peace agreements; suffering and survival of mothers in war; mothers and the dismantling of apartheid; mothers as activists in violent conflicts or militarized zones; roles of mothers in conflict; mothers as journalists during war-time; impact of violent conflict on mothers as refugees (asylum seekers and/or internally displaced persons); mothers of sons and/or daughters who serve in the military; gender-based violence of women in war and conflict; mothering and loss (of husbands/children); children and loss of mothers; mothers and children left behind in military communi-

ties; mothers who kill; domestic violence against mothers; the war on mothers; rape and/as terrorism; aboriginal mothers/children and residential schooling; social justice organizations for mothers (from MADD to Mothers Against War); patriotic mothering; activist mothering; representations/images of mothers and violence, war, and social justice issues; public policy and mother activists; legal responses to mother activists; reproductive violence; mother activists within indigenous communities; LBGT mothers and social justice issues; victims of violence in the military.

Confirmed Keynote Speakers

Flavia Cherry

National Chairwoman of the Caribbean Association for
Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

Gertrude Fester

Commissioner on the Commission of
Gender Equality South Africa

Linda Renney Forcey

author of *Mothers of Sons:*
Toward an Understanding of Responsibility

Sara Ruddick

author of *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*

Tiisetso Russell

Comparative, International and Development Education,
University of Toronto

Audette Sheppard

Founder, United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere
(UMOVE)

For more information, please contact us at:

Association for Research on Mothering

726 Atkinson, York University,

4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366,

Email us at: arm@yorku.ca

Or, visit our website: <http://www.yorku.ca/crm>

Submissions must be received by November 1, 2008.

To submit work to the journal, one must be a member of ARM.

—*Call for Papers*—

On the celebration of Mother's Day,
the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
and MAMAPALOOZA are hosting
a one-day conference!

Performing Feminist Motherhood: Outlaw Mothers in Music, Media, Arts and Cultural Expression

May 16, 2008 in New York City

We welcome submissions from scholars, students, activists, artists, community agencies, service providers, journalists, mothers and others who work or research in this area. Cross-cultural, historical, and comparative work is encouraged. We encourage a variety of types of submissions including academic papers from all disciplines, workshops, creative submissions, performances, storytelling, visual arts, and other alternative formats.

Topics can include (but are not limited to):

Motherhood, Art, and Creativity; Healing and Creativity; The Performance of the Maternal or Performing Motherhood; Representing the Maternal in Film, Video, Art, Music, and Theater; Theorizing Motherhood and Representation; Race, Representation and Motherhood; Maternal Ambivalence in visual culture; Countering Media Discourses on Motherhood; Maternal Loss, Depression, and Domestic Violence; Performing Feminist Mothering in Practice and Expression; Mother Writer: Writing Motherhood; Creating Outlaw Children; Imaging LGBT Mothers and Maternity; "Late bloomers": Post-Maternal Mother Artists; Representing Motherhood on the Internet; The Politics of Motherhood and Spirituality in Music and Visual Culture; Mothering and Disability: Producing New Paradigms of Normal; Motherhood in the News: Mothers as Newsmaker; Documenting Motherhood: Maternal Documentaries; Mothers, Motherhood and Photography; Behind the Camera: Mothers as Filmmakers, Directors, Producers; Mother Musicians across Musical Genres: Rock, Rap, Folk, Blues, Jazz, Country Narratives of Creative Mothers: Moms who "Rock"; Express-

ing: Imaging Breastfeeding Mothers; Mommy Bloggers: Re-Writing Motherhood, etc.; Dealing with (Post-partum) Depression by Making Creative Work.

**Deadline for Abstract Submissions
February 15, 2008**

*Please email 250 word presentation abstract and 50 word bio to
arm@yorku.ca

MAMAPALOOZA Inc.
**connecting Mothers through Music, Art, Activism and Education
for Cultural, Economic & Social Awareness. MOMS ROCK!**

Mamapalooza serves as a resource for mothers seeking support, awareness and education in the arts, entrepreneurship and areas of mental and physical health. We are a cultural and social service hub, fostering talent, and providing a network for professional advancement, creative fulfillment, and financial education, encouraging well-being for women and families.

Founded in 1998 the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) is the first and still only international feminist research devoted specifically to the topic of mothering-motherhood. Our mandate is to provide a forum for the discussion and dissemination of research on motherhood and to establish a community of individuals and institutions working and researching in the area of mothering and motherhood. ARM houses the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, Demeter Press, and the feminist mothers group MOTHER OUTLAWS.

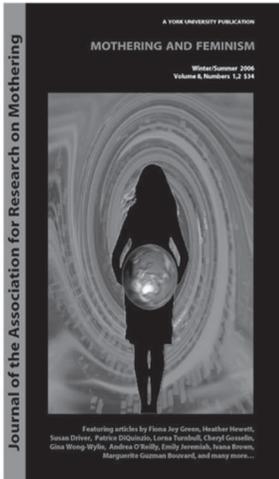
One must be an ARM member to present at the conference.

For information on how to become a member of ARM, please see:
<http://www.yorku.ca/arm/armmembership.html>

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Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering
September 2006

Mothering and Feminism Vol 8.1 & 2
(ARM's first double issue!)



416 pages
 \$34.00 pb

The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering proudly presents the publication of its fifteenth journal issue and first double issue on the topic of Mothering and Feminism.

30+ articles, 15+ book reviews, poetry, artwork and more!

Articles include:

- *Enacting Inter-Generational Feminist Dialogues: Reading Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* as a Queer Postmodern Daughter (Susan Driver)
- *Images and Echoes in Matroreform (Gina Wong-Wylie)
- *"Mommy Memoirs": Feminism, Gender and Motherhood in Popular Literature (Ivana Brown)
- *The Dilemmas of Feminist Activism in Law (Lorna Turnbull)
- *Talkin' Bout a Revolution: Building a Mothers' Movement in the Third Wave (Heather Hewett)
- *Alicia Ostriker's Propaganda for Motherhood (Laura Major)
- *Developing a Feminist Motherline: Reflections on a Decade of Feminist Parenting (Fiona J. Green)
- *Exploring Matrices of Mothering and Feminisms: Life History Methodology as a Venue for Understanding the Complexities of Mothering Discourses for Lesbian Health Advocates (Judith A. MacDonnell)
- *A 21st Century Feminist Agenda for Valuing Care-Work, 'Balancing' Work and Family, and Achieving Economic Independence for Mothers of Young Children (Marty Grace) and many, many more!

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Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering

September 2007

Young Mothers 9.1



300 pages
\$18.00 pb

The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering proudly presents the publication of its sixteenth journal issue on the topic of Young Mothers.

*13 scholarly articles, 23 pieces of writing/art/photography by young moms titled "Young Mothers Speak Out", 15 book reviews, a poetry folio featuring Judith Arcana and more!

Articles include:

- **"Young Mothers, Agency and Collective Action: Issues and Challenges" (Kelly)
 - **"It Doesn't Matter if You're 15 or 45, Having a Child is a Difficult Experience": Reflexivity and Resistance in Young Mothers' Constructions of Identity" (Darisi)
 - **"Don't Look Down on Me Because I Have One": Young Mothers Empowered in a Context of Support (Berman, Silver and Wilson)
 - **"When Schooling is Not Enough: Support, Empowerment and Social Regulation of the Teen Mother in Contemporary Canada" (Ahola-Sidaway and Fonseca)
 - **"Young Mothers in Canadian HIV Awareness Posters: Underrepresentation and Concerns" (Hunter)
 - **"An Inappropriate Transition to Adulthood? Teenage Pregnancy and the Discourses of Childhood in the UK" (Wilson)
 - **"Complex Lives: Young Motherhood, Homelessness and Partner Relationships" (Keys)
 - **"Memorializing and Moralizing Young Motherhood in Barbados" (Downe)
- Plus much more!

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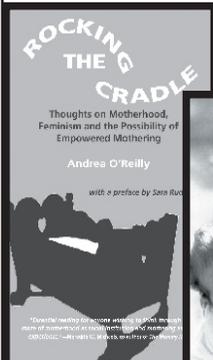
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The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
proudly announces our new book publishing division

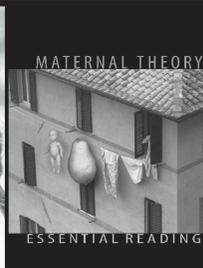
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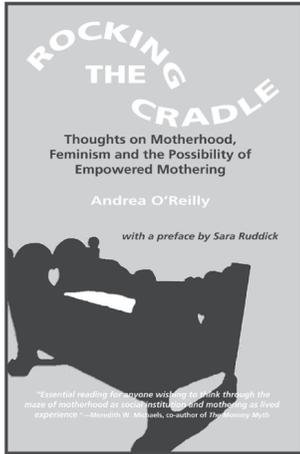
DEMETER PRESS is the newly launched publishing division of the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM). We are the first book publisher focused specifically on the topic of motherhood/mothering. DEMETER PRESS is currently accepting scholarly manuscripts for publication consideration for 2010/2011.

For more information or to submit a manuscript, please contact:
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<http://www.yorku.ca/arm>

Rocking the Cradle:

Thoughts on Motherhood, Feminism and the Possibility of Empowered Mothering

Andrea O'Reilly



1-55014-449-9
May 2006
220 pages \$24.95

The oppressive and the empowering dimensions of maternity, as well as the complex relationship between the two, first identified by Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born*, has been the focus of feminist scholarship on motherhood over the last three decades. While feminist research on motherhood has focused on many topics, these studies have been informed and shaped by larger inquiries: namely, how do we challenge patriarchal motherhood? How do we create feminist mothering? And finally, how are the two aims interconnected? *Rocking the Cradle*, composed of twelve essays, will explore these questions.

“True to its name, O'Reilly's collection “rocks” -- and not just the cradle, but also the foundations of patriarchy's rigid rules for mothering. This highly readable, sweeping, and provocative volume offers a broadly appealing model of the road to empowerment through the practices of feminist mothering.”

-SHARON HAYS, Streisand Chair of Gender Studies, University of Southern California

Andrea O'Reilly is an Associate Professor of Women's Studies, York University, Toronto and Director of the Association for Research on Mothering. She is the author of *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*, and editor of eight books on mothering including *Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering*.

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O'Reilly.. *Rocking the Cradle*
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"Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground:"

Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression, Resistance and Rebirth

edited by Dawn Memee Lavell-Harvard & Jeanette Corbiere Lavell



"Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground"
Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression,
Resistance and Rebirth

D. MEMEE LAVELL-HARVARD AND JEANNETTE CORBIERE LAVELL, EDITORS

OCTOBER 2006
250 pages \$29.95

THIS LANDMARK COLLECTION

is comprised of sixteen chapters by writers including Kim Anderson, Joanne Arnett, Cheryl Gosselin, Roxanne Harde, and Rosalyn Ing.

The collection features four sections:

- **"Entrance into the Womb: Becoming an Aboriginal Mother"
- **"Conceptions and Practices of Aboriginal Mothering"
- **"Big Mother": The Role of the State in the Performance of Mothering"
- **"Literary Representations of Aboriginal Mothering"

Ms. Lavell-Harvard is currently President of the Ontario Native Women's Association, a full time student currently completing her PhD in Education at UWU, and is the first Aboriginal person ever to receive a Trudeau Scholarship. Ms. Harvard is also a full time mother of two little girls, Autumn Sky (8 years) and Eva Lillie (two years). Ms. Lavell-Harvard's research addresses the epidemic of low academic achievement and high drop out rates among Aboriginal populations in Canada.

Jeanette Corbiere Lavell is Ojibway First Nation, and member of the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve on Manitoulin Island. In 1970 her marriage resulted in the loss of her rights to membership to her Reserve under the Indian Act. This initiated a three year pursuit to ensure that the rights of Indian women were equal to the rights of Indian men in the Indian Act. Jeannette is one of the primary and founding Board members of: Ontario Native Women's Organization (ONWA) and Indian Rights for Indian Women Native Women's Organization of Canada. Currently, Jeannette teaches Fine Arts and Parenting at Wasse-Abin Wikwemikong High School.

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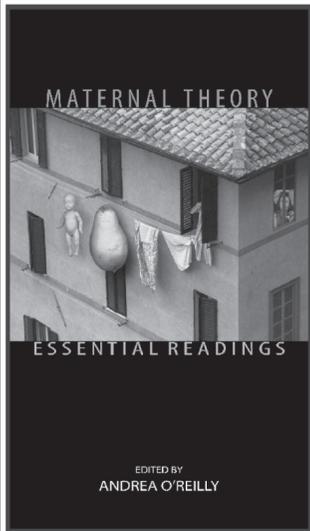
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Maternal Theory: Essential Readings May 2007

edited by Andrea O'Reilly



May 2007
846 pages \$49.95

Theory on mothers, mothering and motherhood has emerged as a distinct body of knowledge within Motherhood Studies and Feminist Theory more generally. This collection, the first ever anthology on maternal theory, introduces readers to this rich and diverse tradition of maternal theory. Composed of 50 chapters and covering more than three decades of scholarship, *Maternal Theory* includes all the "must read" theorists on motherhood. Writers include: Adrienne Rich, Nancy Chodorow, Sara Ruddick, Alice Walker, Barbara Katz Rothman, bell hooks, Sharon Hays, Patricia Hill-Collins, Julia Kristeva, Kim Anderson, Audre Lorde, Ellen Lewin, Daphne de Marneffe, Ariel Gore, Ann Crittenden, Judith Warner and many more. *Maternal Theory* is essential reading for anyone interested in motherhood as experience, ideology, and identity.

Motherhood studies trailblazer Andrea O'Reilly has done it again! *Maternal Theory* provides readers with a much-needed single anthology of the essential readings on theories of motherhood from the past three decades. Folks just discovering the field of maternal theory, and those well versed in feminist theory and theories of motherhood, will find this collection invaluable. Scholars and students alike will broaden their knowledge and their libraries with this indispensable collection of texts on mothers, mothering and motherhood. It's a must read for all, and essential for anyone teaching in the area.

- Fiona Joy Green, Ph.D., Chair, Women's and Gender Studies Department, University of Winnipeg

"We have been hungry for a text that unfolds mother theorizing as both evolutionary and revolutionary. O'Reilly lays out in this reader a sumptuous feast. A broad array of maternal theory staples and delicacies—more than you can digest in one sitting."

- Amber E. Kinsler, Ph.D., Director, Women's Studies, East Tennessee State University

Andrea O'Reilly is an Associate Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University. She is author/editor of twelve books on Mothering/Motherhood including *Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering*. O'Reilly is founder and director of the Association for Research on Mothering.

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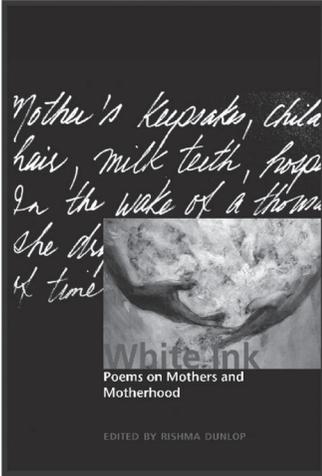
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October 2007

WHITE INK: Poems on Mothers and Motherhood

edited by Rishma Dunlop



October 2007
450 pp \$39.95
ISBN 978-1-55014-484-

Edited by poet Rishma Dunlop, *White Ink* is a rare and stunning collection by some of the finest poets of the late twentieth and early twenty first century. *White Ink* is an anthology in which the world's social and political changes, as well as the imaginative pulse of the past three decades, are uniquely reflected in poetry on motherhood. The mother emerges as a powerful, recurring, and central theme in contemporary poetry, written across cultures, ethnicities, languages, genders, and across geographies, politics, and histories. *White Ink* offers the reader a selection of some of the most compelling voices on the subject, male, female, and international. Unsentimental, edgy, and unflinching, this is a gem of an anthology. A beautiful, satisfying read.

Poets include Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Alicia Suskin Ostriker, Joy Harjo, Sharon Olds, Gwendolyn Brooks, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Patrick Lane, Lorna Crozier, Allen Ginsberg, Irving Layton, Priscilla Uppal, Sandra Gilbert, Grace Paley, Samuel Menashe, Marilyn Hacker, Steven Heighton, C.D. Wright, Cherrie Moraga, Natasha Trethewey, Rita Dove, Adrienne Rich, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Nicole Brossard, Marie Ponsot, Mahmoud Darwish, Naomi Shihab Nye, Fady Joudah, Daphne Marlatt, Molly Peacock, and many others.

Rishma Dunlop is the winner of the 2003 Emily Dickinson Award. She is the author of three books of poetry: *Metropolis* (Mansfield Press, 2005), *Reading Like a Girl* (Black Moss Press, 2004) and *The Body of My Garden* (Mansfield Press, 2002). Rishma is also co-editor of *Red Silk: An Anthology of South Asian Canadian Women Poets* (Mansfield Press, 2004), and her work has appeared in numerous journals and magazines. She is a professor of literature and education at York University in Toronto, Canada.

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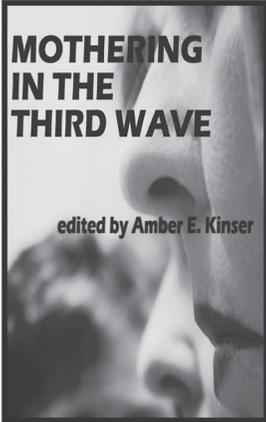
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20% off all preorders!

Spring 2008

Mothering in the Third Wave

edited by Amber E. Kinser



Spring 2008
 250 pages \$29.95
 ISBN 978-1-55014-485-7

This important new collection

focuses on motherhood as a third wave feminist project, or on third wave as an era, in which we practice a diversity of feminisms in tension with a “postfeminist” ideology.

Mothering in the Third Wave offers new insights into critical examinations of the institution of motherhood. It fills the gaps left by other texts, which do not explore the personal, lived experiences of diverse mothers and their families, do not attend to multi-ethnic and transnational perspectives, and do not amplify the voices of myriad family forms and stages.

Mothering in the Third Wave explores particular complexities of feminist life in an era characterized by postfeminist, thank-goodness-the-struggle-is-over ideology, and examines the power of pop-culture, technology, and globalism in shaping feminist thought with regard to mothering-motherhood.

The collection features four sections:

- *Motherhood Transforming; *Mothering Resistance
- *Mothering Contradictions; *Representing Motherhood

Contributing writers include: Andrea Fechner, Larissa M. Mercado-Lopez, Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Laura C. Tuley, Wendy Nakanishi, Heather Hewett and Judith Stadman Tucker.

Amber E. Kinser is Associate Professor of Communication and Director of Women’s Studies at East Tennessee State University. Her research and writing interests explore family interaction, sexuality and gender, and feminist theory and activism. She has published articles in the *National Women’s Studies Association Journal* and *Women in Language*. She is mother to a daughter and a son.

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20% off all preorders!

Spring 2008

Mother Knows Best: Talking Back to the "Experts"

edited by Jessica Nathanson and Laura C. Tuley



Spring 2008
250 pages \$29.95

This important new collection

analyzes, reevaluates and, in some cases, challenges "expert" advice on pregnancy, mothering and mothering practices. *Mother Knows Best* argues for a feminist, mother-centered critique of authoritative messages, one that takes into account the vast socio-economic and cultural differences mothers experience, as well as the different experiences of privilege and oppression.

The book is comprised of twenty chapters by writers including Amber Kinser, Laura Major, Meredith Nash, Catherine Ma, Chris Bobel, May Friedman and Susan Driver.

The collection features four sections:

- "Out of our Bodies: Pregnancy and Birth"
- "Is Breast Always Best?: Breastfeeding"
- "Challenging Practice: Raising Our Children"
- "Mother Guilt: Being 'Good' Mothers"

Jessica Nathanson is Visiting Assistant Professor of English and Gender Studies at Augustana College. She has written on bisexual and multiracial identities and politics, issues of feminist pedagogy as well as pregnancy loss. She is currently at work on a history of the South Dakota abortion rights movement.

Laura C. Tuley is an Instructor in English and Women's Studies at the University of New Orleans and a graduate student in Counseling at Loyola University. She has written on the theme of feminine embodiment in the work of Luce Irigaray and has published on feminist theory, art and culture. Laura writes a regular column on mothering in Mamazine.

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Nathanson/Tuley *Mother Knows Best ...*
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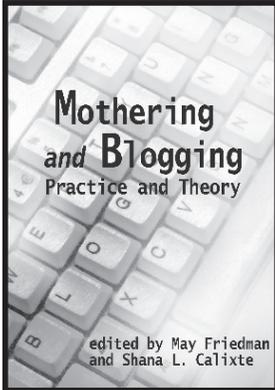
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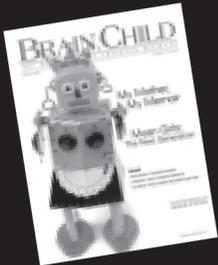
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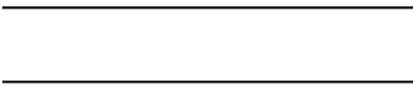
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