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An Analysis of Motherhood Represented in the Blogs in Taiwan

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Abstract

Motherhood is commonly viewed as belonging within the private or domestic sphere that women are supposed to occupy, and mommy talks---personal experiences about mothering and parenting are often considered trivial and of no much importance under a patriarchal culture. In the contemporary context of a heightened emphasis on individual personhood , mothers' subjectivity and agency were however not often addressed. Even worse, the intensive mothering ideology, or so-called "new momism" sets a standard for ideal mother so high that no one can live up to.

Blogs become popular and well developed in Taiwan these few years. If the virtual community allows pluralistic perspectives being proclaimed, personal style-featured blogs then actualize individual performance and self-presentation.

This study attempts to analyze the mothers' writing regarding their motherhood in the blogs. By examining the form and content of the mommy blogs, the study aims to understand what mothers do and how they feel about mothering, more importantly, how mommy blogging redefines and reinterprets representations of motherhood. Like writing one's autobiography, blogging is the construction of the self identity in modern time. The study explores the images the mommy bloggers perform and the ways they identified with this old, traditional role---mother. Finally, how the act of writing(blogging) is related to mommy bloggers' sense of subjectivity and personal agency is also discussed.

This study examines what mothers have written and posted in the blogs they run in the biggest mommy blog website in Taiwan called BabyHome (www.babyhome.com.tw). The content of mommy blogs is qualitatively analyzed to see how the role of mother being "acted out", and motherhood being represented.

Introduction

In neoliberal societies, mothers are encouraged to use specialist knowledge about mothers and children as their model of good practice (Chen, 2010). It's suggested, on the one hand, that motherhood is natural and that mothers' knowledge and their skills in childcare emerge easily and instinctually, but on the other, that childrearing is highly skilled and serious, so mothers need to acquaint themselves with formal knowledge and techniques (Phoenix, Woollett & Lloyd, 1991), and comply with physicians' and professionals' expectations or suggestions (Cherry, 1999; Daniels & Parrott, 1996; Murphy, 2000). Books, magazines, websites in relation to childrearing are easy to find to help mothers care their children, interact with their children, and enact their motherhood. In this, it demonstrates how constructions of knowledge articulate with established power relationships and reify popularly accepted notion about "normal/good mothers" (Phoenix, Woollett & Lloyd, 1991).

Mothers are generally portrayed as the central figure in their children's lives, as carers, socializers, tutors, and providers. They are rarely considered having an existence of their own. Historically, motherhood was the defining characteristic of women, if women were not mothers or potential mothers, they were nothing (Medina & Magnuson, 2009; Roy, 1998). What makes a good mother/motherhood has been socially constructed and has political implications and consequences, yet little is recognized and written about mothers as active agents (Phoenix, Woollett & Lloyd, 1991). More often, mothers are discussed as caregivers for their children or partners, their experience around motherhood, however, is hardly addressed beyond the "private"(family & friends...) sector, including their identity as mothers, their feelings towards their children, and their ways of coping with discrepancies between the ideal of motherhood and the real times of their lives. Historically, Women's experiences are regarded as trivial and not of much importance, and thus marginalized or excluded in

a patriarchal culture. Women's voices are stigmatized as fussy sister talk, women's talk, and mommy talk (Hsiao, 2005, 2007; Lopez, 2009).

In the contemporary context of neo-liberalism and postmodernism, Baker (2009) argued that the emphasis on personal agency and decision-making and the declining influence of preordained and institutionalized structures have changed modern femininity vastly around the world. The study found although Australian young mothers feature a supposedly superseded and traditional gender role in their family lives and motherhood, they perform a transformation in the experience of the personal; particularly the construction of individualized biographies of reinvention through motherhood.

Lee (2009) analyzed the changing role of mothers in modern China. Women return to their work as soon as one month after giving birth. Their children are sent to daycare centers, nannies, and kindergartens. The ideology of childrearing and mothering has been considerably shifted in accordance with the enhanced women's self-consciousness in this country. Chao (2005) also pointed out that Chinese (also Taiwanese) mothers born in 1980' confronted the dilemma and conflicts which their mothers had never had. These women grew up in an economically developed, highly competitive society which provides them a platform to make self realization and achievement in all areas, yet demands excellence of their performance in all areas. Women suffer in great role conflicts. Douglas and Michaels (2005) also claimed that contemporary mothers fulfill many social roles while striving to meet the expectations to nurture, schedule, taxi, and feed their families. The standards for good mothering seem to be escalating, and the constraints on mothers' pursuing self actualization seem to be also expanding. The intensive mothering ideology or the new "momism" is regarded to collide with individuated personhood and one's subjectivity promoted in the postmodern and neo-liberal society.

Besides the advocacy of women's voice heard, experience respected, and dedication verified by feminists, technology seems to provide assistance in the process of mother's empowerment. The articulation of mothers' experience in the public sphere had not been valued or even allowed just as women's other collective experience had long been excluded from history of mankind. Alice Walker's (You, 2008) and Adrienne Rich's (Hsia, 1997) are very few exceptions.

Practices associated with motherhood is seen as part of the private or domestic sphere where women belong whilst men inhabit in the social or working context where important and serious mainstream discourses take place(Burr, 2000; Lopez, 2009). Today the public/private boundary might be trespassed by the internet-enabled (virtual) space; such as chatrooms, forums, blogs, etc.

With the advent of easy-to-use weblog software, blogs become popular in Taiwan in recent years, and the number of blogs has been soaring. Along with the rising of the individual self-consciousness, personal style featured blogs become one of the most important site for self expression, presentation, and performance in the age of information (Ong, 2007). One of the characteristics that differentiates blogs from other kinds of writing on the web is that they are written with a strong sense of the author's personality, passion, and point of view, and the most popular content for blogs is the writer's life and experiences(Lopez, 2009).

"Mommy bloggers" are women who blog on issues relating to motherhood and family, and have become an influential section of the blogging community (Neff, 2008). Klein (2009) defined mommy bloggers as a generation of women who are living their parenting years out on the Internet, as a means of spreading the word. When women bloggers wanted a piece of blogosphere; it seems that they wanted was to participate in the public sphere as equals with their male blogging counterparts. Mommy bloggers publicized their mothering experience and so cross the public/

private border set for men and women. Maternal writing in blogs breaks the rule of mother being silent and motherhood being private/domestic. Lopez (2009) then argued that mommy blogging challenges and reinterprets representations of motherhood.

The study explored how motherhood is represented in the internet community for mommy bloggers. Namely, the study focused on the content written by ordinary people, not educational elites nor medical professionals who used to get to define “good/normal” mother and “correct” mothering.

The study of motherhood had been thriving since the latter half of the twentieth century. Motherhood was once imagined by researchers as myths, experiences and the act of identity construction.

Motherhood as Institution

Motherhood is a historically constructed ideology that provides a gendered model of behavior for women, even those who have not given birth or raised children (Reger, 2001). Having children or being a mother is often constructed as a women’s instinct, “...the day will come when you will want children and everything else you have achieved will pale by comparison” (cited from Tropp, 2006). Marriage and domesticity is said the ultimate goal for a woman in a patriarchal culture (Burr, 2000; Roy, 1998), and the media often endorsed the belief that bearing children is the single most important element of adult life (Condit, 1996). If women “choose” not to have children, they are responsible for pathological repercussions within their bodies, which in turn might result in great disorder and pathology at the societal level in epidemic of breast cancer (Lantz & Booth, 1998; Yadlon, 1997). Even today, intentionally childless women still are considered irresponsible, selfish, hedonic, and

often have to deal with the accusations from family and friends in most Chinese communities (Wong, 2007).

Although many gender norms are implicit, maternity norms are clearly expressed in numerous ways by the dominant culture; good women/mothers are thought to be, by nature, altruistic, nurturing and self sacrificing (Burr, 2000; Cherry, 1999). In fact, women in particular are likely to be labeled deviant if their behavior does not adhere to the dominant gender norms. Deviance is socially constructed, subjecting its objects to social control, those whom labeled deviant are exposed to disapproval or penalty. Burr used “monstrous feminine” to signify the woman who falls outside of all gendered notion of femininity and is interpreted as a potential threat to patriarchal and traditional notion of procreation; they might be too old (Hadfield, 2007; Kelha, 2009), too young (Hadfield, 2007; Wilson & Huntington, 2006), not in a relationship with a man (May, 2004; Valdivia, 1998), not be able to stay home with their children (Avellar & Smock, 2003; Garey, 1995; Guendouzi, 2006), or even not be able to breast feed their children (Bartlett, 2003, 2004; Sutherland, 1999).

Guendouzi (2006) wrote that the ideology roots of what currently equates to a good mother are based on the nuclear family and a model of intensive mothering. Hartman has criticized intensive mothering ideology as a major step backward in gender equity, though it continues to be the cultural and political standard by which mothering practices and arrangements are evaluated (cited from Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Mothers, working or not, are considered to be responsible for family care giving and blamable for their children’s incompetence and failure (Kokkonen, 2009).

Choi, Henshaw, Baker, and Tree (2005) conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 primiparous and multiparous women in the UK and found that their expectations were very strongly influenced by the myth of motherhood, and conflicts occurred as a result of the discrepancy between the myth and the reality. However, the

study found no evidence of resistance to the ideology of motherhood; women were so afraid of being seen to have failed, the only option was the work harder at the performance and this then perpetuates and reinforces the ideology.

Motherhood as Experience

Early in the second wave of United States feminism, activists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Firestone identified motherhood as a target for transformation and reevaluation. Until mid 1970's, some feminists, such as Adrienne Rich, argued that denying and rejecting motherhood will obliterate the uniqueness of female experience, and so then reframed motherhood as an essentially positive experience damaged by patriarchal constraints that devalued women's work (Reger, 2001; Yu, 2006)

One of the major categories in the study of motherhood is the experience of mothers. It is disputed that mothering practices have long been based on a white, middle-classed, heterosexual dual-parenting ideology, the diversity of motherhood should have gained more attention. Buzzanell, Naymer, PazTagle, and Liu (2007) explored how diverse (Asian, Hispanic, African American) women perceive and enact their transition into working motherhood in ways that reflect (and are shaped by) their social identities. It was found that their discourse conveys their struggle over and the interplay among mainstream United States as well as their family structures of support. Kielty (2008) also showed interest in the experience of mothers outside of the mainstream. Twenty non-resident mothers in the UK were interviewed to examine their discursive management of their atypical situation and how they positioned themselves in relation to dominant cultural scripts surrounding motherhood. It was argued that these mothers are at risk of isolation as a consequence of social stigma and this may pose barriers to their taking a full and active part in the lives of their

children.

Other than ethnicity, more facets of mothering practices were discussed. Kelha(2009)examined the experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care of middle class women who have become mothers after the age of 35. The study analyzed how these women perceive discourses concerning their age and the medical risks attached to it and their possible strategies of resisting it. May (2004) took a different route into lone motherhood by focusing in identity construction in the life stories of Finnish lone mothers. It was said that the social category of lone motherhood is not one that the lone mothers themselves adopt in their narrative constructions of the self, instead, they attempt to create space for themselves within the normative narratives on motherhood and womanhood, thus refuting the idea that lone motherhood is constitutive of identity.

In Taiwan, different mothering practices were widely investigated. Mothers having children with autism, mothers conceiving with the aid of reproductive technology, mothers with schizophrenia, lesbian mothers, mothers with physical disabilities, divorced lone mothers, and foreign mothers are just to name one or two.

Motherhood as Identity and Subjectivity

In recent years, identity and difference have been the focus of key debates in cultural studies. Influenced by this trend, mothers' identity and subjectivity also become one of the central issues in the recent studies around motherhood. You(2008) reminded when addressing mothering practices, the difference or diversity is essential as well as similarity. Motherhood constructed in various historical and cultural contexts deserves fair investigation and the subjectivity and personal agency of mothers deserve recognition.

Collett(2005)studied the way mothers of young children dress their children, their concerns about when and with whom to manage impression, and the impression these women hope they portray through the physical appearance of their children. Results show that women do use well-dressed and groomed children to enact and confirm identities as “good mothers” and to protect and enhance their own self-concepts during the course of everyday social interaction.

Although previous research has shown that mothers alter work status to live up to intensive mothering expectation, Johnston and Swanson’s (2006) study found that mothers also alter their construction of intensive mothering expectations to reconcile these demands with their work status choices. Mothers with different employment decisions differ in their construction of Y.Elvin-Nowak and H.Thomsson’s three discursive positions---accessibility, happy mother happy child and separation of work and home. Garey (1995) also examined the way in which employed women with children use the night shift to support a construction of motherhood which closely resembles that of mothers who are not in the labor force. Night shift nurses construct themselves as “stay-at-home moms” by limiting the public visibility of their labor force participation, by involving their children and themselves in symbolically-invested activities, and by positioning themselves in the culturally-appropriate place and time: at home, during the day. All of those strategies work to highlight their visibility as mothers.

Infant feeding is one of the central issues regarding the neonatal care. In a capitalistic culture, mothers have not routinely breastfed for several generations. Bartlett (2004) argued that breastfeeding is a cultural practice, rather than something natural, innate, or even gendered. Most of studies see breastfeeding as a personal choice and a personal practice which has varying levels of success or failure. Failure to breastfeed is interpreted as a personal failing of the mother. In fact, feeding

becomes a moral minefield to mothers (Bartlett, 2003).

The present social context makes breastfeeding extremely difficult for many women. Experts advise mothers to breast-feed and warn of the short-medium-and long-term risks associated with formula feeding. Murphy (2000) found most mothers accept the validity of these expert claims and most initiate breastfeeding. However, many abandon breastfeeding before experts recommended and develop strategies to deal with the threat to their identities as good, neoliberal citizens and mothers. Johnson and Williamson (2009) analyzed, from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, discourses surrounding expressing breast milk instead of breastfeeding the newborns. From interviews with sixteen first time mothers in England, they identified expressing breast milk as a substitution which provides convenience, efficiencies, and independence for women. Mothers actively create the “good maternal body” and use expressing breast milk as a way of aligning subjectivity with cultural ideologies of motherhood.

Foucault claimed that we as subjects are perpetually engaged in process whereby we define and produce our own ethical self-understanding. The methods were called technologies of the self, also called care of the self or practices of the self (Capurro, 1996). Technologies of the self are the form of knowledge and strategies that permit individuals to manage one’s body, soul, thought, conduct, and way of being, including caring the self, knowing, understanding, and judging the self, examining the self, doubting the self, and expressing the self(Chen, 2004; Foucault, 1988). Care of the self is the starting point to resist against the domination of social structures, yet also the effect of execution of macrological structures of power.

Some people celebrate that virtual space created by new technology provides freedom and emancipation for the modern self, some consider the self in the cyberspace is only one of those created in everyday life. However, computer

technology and the Internet seem to embody the eccentricity of the modern self and profoundly change the way individuals construct the self.

In the age of postmodernism, the self is multiple, eccentric, local, scattered, fragile, and fluid. One has to rely on his very own life stories to find and define his self (Chen, 2004), and to suture the eccentric subject, the society is to identify differences among social groups and display the diversity of meanings rather than pursuing consensus.

Kitzmann claimed that in both blogging and the act of writing one's autobiography, an important feature is foregrounding the construction of the modern individual self(cited from Lopez, 2009). In the act of writing from one's own subjectivity about one's own life, one appears to be creating a bounded identity.

Mommy bloggers are those who write about tales of parenting joys and woes and the number of them is increasing. However, in a conference in San Jose, California in 2005, more than 300 women gather to discuss their place in the blogosphere through BlogHer, an internet community for women bloggers. The mommy bloggers felt attacked and marginalized as if their personal style was somehow less valuable than their colleague's entries on current events or politics. Lopez (2009) argued that the way mommy bloggers are treated is connected to a long history of the struggle for women to define their identity in relation to the title of mother. Although mommy blogs might still contain complaints and what is considered worthless or insignificant dramas, this collection of writing is given new power when they are posted in the Internet for the public to view and discuss. It's not just solitaire or record-keeping, mommy bloggers write their very own stories so that others can recognize their similarities and shared interests. Chan(2008) also analyzed a sample of chat room and forum messages from a user driven Hong Kong-based parenting website called Happy Land, and found that the website has developed beyond its technology-mediated

nature into a community of face-to-face friendships and social and emotional support.

Methodology

The website analyzed in this study is a Taiwan-based Chinese language parenting site called BabyHome (<http://www.babyhome.com.tw>). The site was established in 2002 by two male engineers who only became fathers and wished to share their kids' photos with friends and write down the experiences of being a father. By 2010, BabyHome has become the biggest and the most popular website of its kind in Taiwan. The site provides personal blogging spaces for diaries, albums, guestbooks, e-mail boxes, and spaces for videos. There are a variety of forums for public discussion of parenting issues which contain millions of posts from participants. From the data offered by the BabyHome, there are 180,000 visits on the front-page of the BabyHome website per day, and 1,800,000 visits on the forums per day, and 3,000,000 total visits on the mommy blogs per day.

BabyHome Families are the spaces for those who have the same interests and/or experiences to interact and share. Members can set up a family and be the head and gather family members(participants). From the long-term observation, the study found three types of families. One is developed by those who have children of same age, such as Family of babies born in July 1995, Family of babies born in September the year of cow, etc. The second type is formed according to where the mommies and babies are located. These mothers usually lived in the same district and shared useful information of resources in that area. They often have family gather events and group shopping (stores or internet). The last type of family is for those who have similar experiences such as Family of children with Tourette syndrome, Family of single moms, Family of mothers who lost their kids, Family of step-mothers, etc.

Besides the participant observation of the website, the researcher also went interview with the chief of the public relation department in BabyHome to obtain detailed information about mommy bloggers, their content of the blogs, and also the forum discussions and BabyHome Families.

There were more than half million of registered members in the BabyHome website by January 2010. About one tenth of the members paid for the membership, called VIP members. These members paid NTD.365~1,990(USD11~60) per year to get more spaces and services than the free members.

Since BabyHome website is a huge data-base for our study, it's not easy to choose the texts to be analyzed. For the forum posts, the keyword research built in the website was used. On the front page of the website, some of the most discussed topics were listed. The researcher read through the content (topics and full texts) and started to form the keywords to be used later on. The keywords used to find the posts on forums were "childrearing", "mommy talks", "parents-in-law", "new mothers", "breastfeeding", "family", "work", "at-home mothers", "working mothers", and so on. Most of the texts chosen were located in two forums---"Letting it all out" and "Free talks". This is consistent with what interview data shows.

Since I can't use keywords to find blog texts, it seems even harder to search for the mommy blogs. In BabyHome, mothers' blogging is displayed in the form of diary. The mommy bloggers who are active in this website were recommended by the PR chief in the interview. The researcher also read through the forum posts obtained by the keywords, and found those mothers who often asked questions and responded. Besides, in the section of BabyHome Families, hundreds of families were scanned to look up those having members over 100 people, and found the heads of those families. With the strategies described above, the study focused on the texts written by mommy bloggers participating in the BabyHome website most vigorously and actively.

Results

Based on the interview with the chief of the PR department in BabyHome and the internal data provided, most members of BabyHome mommy blog website are aged from thirty-one to forty(68%). Eighty-five percent of them have only one child, and seventy-two percent have young children (aged under 3). Members' educational level is relatively high, sixty-eight percent of mothers had gone to university/college. Twenty-eight percent of users are stay-at-home mothers. More than half of them (54%) earn less than 30,000 NT dollars per month, considered fairly low income. Around two thirds of members live in the north of the island.

Since most writing and discussion about motherhood are in the blogs and the forums, the researcher had long been reading the posted articles in both. There are more than forty forums in the BabyHome website yet two of them contain some sixty to seventy percent of discussion, "Free talks" and "Letting it all out"(based on the interview data and participant observation). Topics attracting the most posts are "childrearing", "stay-at-home mothers' anguish", "working mothers' dilemma", "living with the parents-in-law" and so on.

BabyHome is a Chinese site, all posts are in Chinese, yet few users live in China, Hong Kong and Macau (2.62%) and America and Canada (1.42%). In analyzing texts in the blogs and forums, it was found that some users were in dual-earner, small nuclear families, yet quite a few lived with their parents-in-law, even sisters or brothers-in-law.

This study aims to understand what mothers do and how they feel about mothering, the images of mothers the mommy bloggers portray in their writing in blogs and forums, Frankly, as a reader, I enjoyed reading these research texts, sharing their happiness of childrearing, the joy to be with their kids, to be needed and wanted

by their kids, yet also empathized with their agony to be isolated, devaluated, despised, in childrearing and housekeeping, and the torture and dilemma between work and family.

Mommy bloggers keep all kinds of records, everything and every aspect about their kids' lives; height, weight, the shots gotten, how much of and when the milk or food was taken, when and how and even how much their babies pee or poo and sleep, how good or bad a kind (or brand) of baby product is for their kids, how friendly or not a place (restaurants, super markets, hospitals, pediatrician clinics, parks, kindergartens...) is to their kids. What their kids are going to eat, drink, watch and learn, mothers try to evaluate and get involved. During pregnancy, mothers also write about their body and emotion changes and the sentimental connection with their babies. Mothers also like to share their family lives, having gone where with whom doing what, getting what from whom and giving what to whom, and how they feel about all these. By reading these mothers' unexciting, everyday details which are so natural, real, mundane, even trivial, yet so unique, peculiar and individual, one seems to witness these mothers' little happiness and misfortune in their lives, and seems to be able to understand and imagine their lives through the stories and anecdotes in their blogs. The language used in mommy blogs and forums is extremely informal and usually narrative. Some of the content is full of humor and levity to entertain the audience, yet still show the abundance of sentiments. The readers of such blogs feel very close to the author partly because of the resonance. They would laugh and cry along as if they are listening to a friend.

Scholars had criticized the Mother War rhetoric; work status and mothering are culturally constructed as rigid binaries (Johnston & Swanson, 2004; Medina & Magnuson, 2009; Stephens, 2004). However, the cultural Mother War rhetoric had seemed to be internalized in most mothers' thinking. The study has gained a few

discourses or discursive positions surrounding motherhood produced by participants in BabyHome website. Mothers often identified with these two categories of mothers, yet the discourses were not so exclusively created by each category.

1. Sacrifice and Persistence

Once a woman got married, it seems so “normal” to scarify herself. Some mothers had to move far away, some quit their jobs for childbearing and childrearing. The work status and living status might be tremendously changed for some mothers, yet never fathers.

Although some mothers did get help, it was so taken for granted for women to raise their kids without a handful help from men. One respondent even confessed that as long as her husband doesn't have an affair or hit her, she's going to tolerate the marriage. Some mothers said that it is out of a woman's free will to get married, to have children and to breastfeed, she has to endure whatever has come along. Mothers often advise one another not to “think too much”, to loosen up a bit, or to see things from a different perspective.

Studies found that each additional child is associated with a negative effect on women's wages, and the motherhood wage penalty has not diminished over time (Avellar & Smock, 2003). Quite a few mothers in our study quitted their jobs, lost jobs or shifted to lower paid jobs. Becoming a stay-at-home mother was considered a sacrifice. Mothers often claimed that they are forced to give up their jobs since nobody in the family will take care of their kids or her family doesn't allow or can't afford a nanny. Most mothers, especially the participants in forums, were not happy even suffering yet tried hard to be a “good” mother.

2. Reflection, Self-Doubting and Self-Blaming

. It's common to see the reflective rhetoric in mommy blogs and forums. Mothers tend to question themselves; whether they are not capable enough or haven't tried hard enough. Both at-home mothers and working mothers are struggling and living in anxiety. Mothers felt great conflicts between work and family, feeling guilty for not being able to personally take care of their kids. Those "holiday mothers" seem to suffer the most. They claimed that their kids don't want them and are not close to them, and this makes them ineligible mothers. The working mothers on the net seem to have an ideal, perfect mother prototype, and so often blame themselves for not being good enough.

3. Childrearing is Mom's Business?

Stay-at-home mothers or not, mothers seem to carry this thought, agree or not. In many mommy blogs, details in children's growth and what they achieved are often elaborately and carefully recorded. This seems to bring such joy and sense of accomplishment to the bloggers, Mothers enjoy being needed and desired by their children. Almost all mothers show their intolerance that they are not the most (if not only) important character in their children's lives. These seem to confirm the age-old myth: family care giving is primarily the responsibility of women. Some mommy bloggers, mostly at-home mothers, cry out against the myth, yet the situation was not much changed. Only when mothers are so exhausted that they are getting sick, their husbands would offer "help" in childrearing and/or housekeeping.

Work-family conflicts are generally more stressful for women because men and women differ in their understanding of what constitute their respective parental roles.

Regardless of their relative contribution to family income, men tend to think of their parental role as income provider and women perceive theirs as care provider, even when care is partially or wholly substituted. Chan (2008) indicated that Hong Kong mothers still regarded their care giver role to be integral to their identity as parents. This might also be applied to the mothers in Taiwan. Though in the mommy blogs and forums, protests about doing most of housekeeping and looking after children, the labor distribution or gender role ideology in family has changed very slowly in Taiwan. At-home mothers complained a great deal about getting little or no help from their husbands, while working mothers felt their husbands would not share housework and childrearing in the holidays, especially those living with their parents-in-law. Ironically, those who claimed “gotten help” from their husbands in housekeeping and child caring show such gratitude and often feel lucky to have “good” husbands. If taking care of applause and working mothers who want their weekends off bring about such blame?

4. Accessibility, Happiness, and Separate Spheres

Current western models of motherhood are a product of both hegemonic institutional discourses and the discourses expressed by women themselves in their everyday interaction. It is suggested that accessibility, happiness, and separate spheres emerged as the most dominant discursive positions open to women when discussing motherhood. The first position suggests that the well-being of the child is dependent on continual access to the mother. The second position suggests that happiness of the mother will promote happiness in the child. The third position asserts separate spheres for employment and motherhood (Guendouzi, 2006). This model of motherhood suggests women need to be happy and fulfilled to promote well-being in their children.

At the same time, however, women need to be accessible and to engage in intensive mothering practices. This model sets up a dialectical tension between two positions that may be in opposition to each other: being there for your children (accessible) and achieving your own individual needs (separate spheres). The first two discursive positions emerged more than the third one in this study. It's commonly agreed that mothers are optimal for their kids, other family members/relatives are second, and the paid nannies are usually the last choice. If financially allowed, women should take care of their own kids. Mommy bloggers and participants are reluctant to let their relatives, especially their mothers-in-law take care of their kids and don't trust nannies. They often complain and criticize the ways others care for their kids. Mothers insisting working and sending their kids away without acceptable reasons are questioned and contradicted.

However, working mothers in this study develop anti-discourses against the accessibility in dominant discourses of motherhood. First of all, working mothers argued that by working and making money, they can provide the kids better lives materially and non-materially which staying home with kids might not afford.

Some mother takes themselves as examples, saying that their own mothers were working when they were growing up, yet they don't feel inappropriate or sentimentally not close to their mothers. Some mothers even admitted that they were not very nurturing, and the professional nannies (nannies obtain a license after taking courses and passing tests and exams) might take better care of their kids.

Working mothers also expressed their dislike for the famous saying "Children grow up only once". They argued that they accompany and take care of their kids after work and during holidays, and do not totally miss out the process of their children's growth.

"Happy mother, happy baby" discourse was recognized by mothers on the net. It

was often seen that respondents reminded the mommy bloggers and forum posters to love themselves, to loosen up a little, to give themselves a break and not to push themselves too hard. Mothers are advised to understand themselves before they make decision; to work or to stay home. If they feel sacrificial for their family and kids, they might be happy at the end.

5. Busy & Lazy Husbands Need to be Trained and Educated

Husbands written in mommy blogs and forums in Taiwan are relatively similar to those in Hong Kong in Chan's (2008) study. Husbands were often portrayed as incompetent and indifferent, playing only a minor role in parenting and domestic affairs generally. For a man in Taiwan, women in the family do all the housework; before he got married, his mom and sisters do it, after married, his wife should do the job. Some husbands even thought that it was shameful to take out the garbage if the couple lives with his parents. Quite a few husbands are called by the mommy bloggers "his majesty" since they never do anything around the house.

Some fathers were terribly busy in their work. They are often on business trip, or working till midnight. The working mothers, on the contrary, have to rush home to get the kids, and feed them, supervise them, bath them, check their homework, send them to bed, prepare their lunch tomorrow, and finally do their unfinished work from their jobs. More and more husbands work in China and only come home once a week or a month, or even longer. This type of family gained popularity these recent years since the commercial trade between Taiwan and China became frequent. This trend seems to take men out of their parenting roles even more and leave women heavier burden of caring their children.

Opposite to most mothers' expectations in Taiwan, great deals of married men

believe that they don't have to do the housework as long as they bring back the bacon. Those happier mothers (especially at-home mothers) are those whose husbands are more willingly to share the housework (including care for children). Respondent mothers repeatedly emphasized that "all" men need to be educated and trained to fit their parenting roles and mothers are to teach them how to do the housework and make them share the painstaking jobs that moms have been doing.

6. Autonomy of Mothering Practices being Threatened

Some mothers in this study were found to be deprived of the autonomy of their mothering practices. Mothers living with their parents-in-law, at-home mothers, and new mothers suffer the most and complain a great deal about being interfered in the ways of caring their babies (kids) by their relatives, mostly mothers-in-law. Mothers show such aversion even hatred toward their mothers-in-law when criticized on the ways they raise their kids. Mothers-in-law were portrayed as lack of modern knowledge of childcare, self-righteous, nagging, picky, and always boasting of their mothering experiences and belittling their daughters-in-laws' .

In Taiwanese culture, it seems common for women in the family to fight for babies (kids). There are far more complicated relationships among mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, sisters-in-law, and other in-laws in oriental cultures which often have a strong kinship. In many mommy blogs, the interactions with these relatives are often described. It seems that mothers-in-law always interfere in mothers' childcare and try to them advices that are not welcomed.

7. Be Financially Independent

Whenever mothers asked about whether to quit their jobs to take care of kids in their blogs or forums, they obtained many advices not to do so. Mothers said if you don't have a job, you don't have money, status and dignity, and no one in the family would listen to what you say. At-home moms were considered disadvantaged. Since the ones who bring back the bacon in the family (usually husbands) often show superiority to them. At-home mothers often felt not being appreciated for her sacrifice and hard working. They found themselves with no self-esteem, no sense of accomplishment, and no money, nowhere to go and no way out of their misery.

8. I'm a Stay-at-Home Mother, and I'm Very Busy!

Just as Julie Stephens (2004) had written, "The mother in this contemporary phase of capitalism is caught in a constant process of anxiety-ridden self-improvement. Like other social relationships. Motherhood cannot be seen in isolation from the new capitalism. In a highly competitive job market requiring people to reinvent themselves according to performance-driven principles, the identity of the new capitalist mother is intricately bound up with a logic that is central to current economic arrangements and work practices." At-home mothers seem also aware of this logic, many protested heatedly that people often think they are idle and have a lot of free time. Some claimed that they run their family and marriage just like running business and staying-at-home is also a "job", only without salary. At-home mothers carefully and specifically listed what they have done for the kids, their husbands, and other family members, and all kinds of errands, chores, and domestic affairs. Their lives were portrayed busy and stressing. They complained about not getting any recess, not even a sick leave. Many mothers on the net, regardless working or staying home, seem to agree the notion that being an at-home mother is harder than being a

working mother. Working mothers often admitted that they have had enough after a few days of staying with their kids during some consecutive holidays and felt happy and relieved to send the kids away.

At-home mothers talked about the joy of seeing their kids grow and being there for them, witnessing every step of their children's development and not missing out any "first time" of their kids. Yet the hard work of taking care of children is never recognized by a patriarchal culture. In Taiwan, it's typical to think that at-home mothers don't need to go to work, "just" stay home and take care of the kids, how hard could that be?

In mommy blogs and forums, many at-home moms spilled out their personal stories full of anger, frustration, laments, regrets, self-pity, and almost every one of them was tragic and heart-broken to the readers. The responses these posts attained are pretty much the same---get a job, mom! This gives an impression that working is one (if not only) way out of misery for at-home mothers.

9. Mean Parents-in-Law, Loving Original Parents

Although the stay-at-home mothers complained more about their parents-in-law, working mothers also felt the family they are married to do not treat them well. Parents-in-law (especially mothers-in-law) were portrayed selfish and not being fair. They only love their own kids and treat the daughters-in-law as outsiders. Taiwanese women get married and some of them move to live with their husbands, parents-in-law, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law and their wives (or/and kids). Although the type of the nuclear family gains popularity at present time, quite a few bloggers still live with their in-laws.

These mothers complained about having to do most of the work around the

house and their husbands, and sisters-in-law practically have to do nothing. If the working mothers ask their husbands to share the housework, their mothers-in-law would interfere and stop them.

Most mothers felt unfairly treated in the family they were married to and their contributions often were not regarded important and appreciated. On the contrary, mothers felt their own parents really love them and stand by them. Original families care about them and give them advices not to quit their jobs for their own good. In-laws might ask mothers to quit their jobs to take care of the kids or they might push mothers out to work and make money for the family. Either way, mothers felt being exploited, and never is for their own good.

10. Breast is Best

In recent years, the government in Taiwan has been promoting breastfeeding. The notion “Breast is Best” for infant feeding seems to gain most mothers’ recognition and verification in our study. Mothers on the blogs and forums show such efforts and persistence to breastfeed their kids that they had gone through pain, frustration, physical discomfort, lack of sleep, nipple bleeding and even worse, mastitis. It was said to breastfeed, there must be a lot of pain, mothers were encouraged to tolerate with the pain and discomfort to succeed in breastfeeding. Mommy bloggers insisted on breastfeeding, regardless the pains, agony and any inconvenience. Mothers said that they don’t want to compromise with the formula even though their family or friends told them no need to push themselves so hard.

In a capitalistic society, women have for half a century lived with the commercial marketing of formula, and have not routinely breastfed for several generations. In the logic of late capitalist economy of marketing and free trade, the preferred body was

one under control, pliable, amenable to the subject's will. Lactating bodies do not fit the logic, they are volatile, involuntarily leaking or refusing to be milked, constantly on call and subject to a bewildering array of pain and pleasure (Bartlett, 2003). Breastfeeding on demand devastates the sense of control. Some feminists argued that breastfeeding is not necessarily the best choice for women. Yet in this study, breast milk was considered a precious gift from Mothers to the babies, breastfeeding was constructed as mothers' divine sacrifice for their babies. Therefore, not being able to breastfeed, no matter what the reasons are, becomes another source of guilt for mothers.

Mothers look for advices and share their experiences of breastfeeding mostly in forums. Those had succeeded in breastfeeding often show their pride and pleasure and claimed that it was all worth it. They would enthusiastically help those who were still trying and struggling with useful information and emotional support. By sharing the anguish breastfeeding brought about, mothers gain the sense of being recognized, empathized, encouraged, and empowered. Mothers love to tell stories about their breastfeeding, the personal anecdotes and stories are like those about birth giving. The pain and happiness seem alike to the spectators, yet so unique and particular to individual mothers.

Breastfeeding was portrayed so divinely, whatever or whoever stands in the way of mothers' breastfeeding then was fiercely resented and detested. In the domestic sphere, the ones who used to hinder breastfeeding are often mothers' mothers-in-law. In Taiwan, most mothers of last generation fed their kids with formula milk, and thought that breast milk is not nutritious and so often told their daughters-in-law to stop breastfeeding. In the public sphere, mothers talked about how unfriendly a public space is to breastfeeding mothers. Despite of the law and regulations, there is still no designated space for breastfeeding in some department stores, wholesale centers,

supermarkets, schools, hospitals, restaurants, etc., or the space is shabby not private, or even used for other purposes. Most working places are not friendly to breastfeeding mothers either. Mothers complained about not having time to express breast milk or having to express breast milk in the toilet. Most of their supervisors do not support breastfeeding and often discourage working mothers.

11. Hostile Labor System for Mothers

Working mothers felt the operation of the work force is harmful to their mothering practices. Very few mothers can get off their work at five pm on time, and some have to go to work real early. Mothers were terribly busy in sending their kids to the nannies, day care centers, schools, and picking them up from those places and always worry about being late. Laws violations were often seen in the labor market. Some mothers got fired once pregnant or badly treated. Some pregnant women were forced to take the night shifts (against the law). Some were forced to quit their jobs for unfriendliness and discrimination toward motherhood. It seems that the price of motherhood for Taiwanese women is still high, the “motherhood penalty” is obvious in the mommy blogs and forums.

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Yadlon, S. (1997). Skinny women and good mothers: the rhetoric of risk, control, and culpability in the production of knowledge about breast cancer. *Feminist Studies*, 23(3), 644-677. 4.Short biography of Author:

Short Biography of the Author

Ting-Yu Chen is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Communication in Nanhua University in Chia-Yi , Taiwan. She has been doing research regarding the media representations of disadvantaged, oppressed and/or stigmatized social groups, such as people with AIDS, the elderly, women...). Audience analysis is also one of her research foci. She is interested in women's peculiar interpretation toward various texts from their specific perspectives in a patriarchal culture. Inspired by her own childbearing and child-caring experience, she is now exploring motherhood as social construction, experience, and identity and subjectivity.

國科會補助專題研究計畫項下出席國際學術會議心得報告

計畫編號	NSC 98-2410-H-343 -026 -		
計畫名稱	「看見」母親的聲音：部落格的母職經驗書寫研究		
出國人員姓名	陳婷玉	服務機構及職稱	南華大學傳播學系助理教授
會議時間	99年10月28日至99年10月30日	會議地點	馬來西亞檳城
會議名稱	(中文)ACMC2010 國際會議 “媒體與文化：全球同質與在地認同 (英文) Asian Congress for Media and Communication 2010 International conference. “Media and Culture: Global Homogeneity& Local Identity”.		
發表論文題目	(中文)部落格母職再現分析 (英文) An Analysis of Motherhood Represented in the Blogs		

一、參加會議經過

本研究成果於亞洲媒體與傳播協會(Asian Congress for Media & Communication, ACMC) 2010年國際研討會中發表，並已被該組織所出版發行的學術期刊接受刊登。ACMC 是一個以聯繫亞洲國家有關媒體、傳播與語言教育之學術研究機構為宗旨的國際性專業組織，近年來致力於舉辦學術研討會、工作坊、專題討論與人員訓練、贊助會員有關媒體與傳播相關研究計畫，並促進亞洲各國傳播學術機構的合作與交流（ACMC 官網

<http://www.asianmediacongress.org>)。

二、與會心得

這是研究者第一次參加由亞洲的組織舉辦有關媒體與傳播的國際研討會，這才發現與會學者來自亞洲各個國家，印度、日本、菲律賓、馬來西亞、印尼、中國、泰國等。所有論文以英文發表，同時論文與發表的水準都相當高，論文發表的地點、時間的掌控也相當好，遠較前一年研究者在中國大陸廣州暨南大學的國際研討會（由 ICA 協辦）好的多。

三、考察參觀活動(無是項活動者略)

四、建議

台灣傳播研究在亞洲其實相當被邊緣化，除了亞洲多數國家的一中政策是其中一個原因外，台灣學者們不太熱中參與美國與英國（多數學者留學的國家）的協會以外所主辦的國際研討會亦是主要原因。我認為今後應鼓勵學者參與亞洲地區的學術研討會，畢竟亞洲國家相較於英美先進國家，和我們的文化鄰近性較高，在國際的處境上亦較相近，也許在傳播研究領域上能更有共鳴與雷同之處，進而發展出更吻合我們文化的傳播理論與政策也未可知。

五、攜回資料名稱及內容

會議之議程

六、其他

國科會補助計畫衍生研發成果推廣資料表

日期:2010/12/27

國科會補助計畫	計畫名稱: 「看見」母親的聲音: 部落格的母職經驗書寫研究
	計畫主持人: 陳婷玉
	計畫編號: 98-2410-H-343-026- 學門領域: 文化研究
無研發成果推廣資料	

98 年度專題研究計畫研究成果彙整表

計畫主持人：陳婷玉		計畫編號：98-2410-H-343-026-				計畫名稱：「看見」母親的聲音：部落格的母職經驗書寫研究	
成果項目		量化			單位	備註（質化說明：如數個計畫共同成果、成果列為該期刊之封面故事...等）	
		實際已達成數（被接受或已發表）	預期總達成數（含實際已達成數）	本計畫實際貢獻百分比			
國內	論文著作	期刊論文	0	0	100%	篇	
		研究報告/技術報告	0	0	100%		
		研討會論文	0	0	100%		
		專書	0	0	100%		
	專利	申請中件數	0	0	100%	件	
		已獲得件數	0	0	100%		
	技術移轉	件數	0	0	100%	件	
		權利金	0	0	100%	千元	
	參與計畫人力（本國籍）	碩士生	0	0	100%	人次	
		博士生	0	0	100%		
		博士後研究員	0	0	100%		
		專任助理	0	0	100%		
國外	論文著作	期刊論文	1	0	100%	篇	
		研究報告/技術報告	0	0	100%		
		研討會論文	1	0	100%		
		專書	0	0	100%		章/本
	專利	申請中件數	0	0	100%	件	
		已獲得件數	0	0	100%		
	技術移轉	件數	0	0	100%	件	
		權利金	0	0	100%	千元	
	參與計畫人力（外國籍）	碩士生	0	0	100%	人次	
		博士生	0	0	100%		
		博士後研究員	0	0	100%		
		專任助理	0	0	100%		

<p>其他成果 (無法以量化表達之成果如辦理學術活動、獲得獎項、重要國際合作、研究成果國際影響力及其他協助產業技術發展之具體效益事項等，請以文字敘述填列。)</p>	<p>無</p>
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	成果項目	量化	名稱或內容性質簡述
科 教 處 計 畫 加 填 項 目	測驗工具(含質性與量性)	0	
	課程/模組	0	
	電腦及網路系統或工具	0	
	教材	0	
	舉辦之活動/競賽	0	
	研討會/工作坊	0	
	電子報、網站	0	
	計畫成果推廣之參與(閱聽)人數	0	

國科會補助專題研究計畫成果報告自評表

請就研究內容與原計畫相符程度、達成預期目標情況、研究成果之學術或應用價值（簡要敘述成果所代表之意義、價值、影響或進一步發展之可能性）、是否適合在學術期刊發表或申請專利、主要發現或其他有關價值等，作一綜合評估。

1. 請就研究內容與原計畫相符程度、達成預期目標情況作一綜合評估

達成目標

未達成目標（請說明，以 100 字為限）

實驗失敗

因故實驗中斷

其他原因

說明：

2. 研究成果在學術期刊發表或申請專利等情形：

論文： 已發表 未發表之文稿 撰寫中 無

專利： 已獲得 申請中 無

技轉： 已技轉 洽談中 無

其他：（以 100 字為限）

3. 請依學術成就、技術創新、社會影響等方面，評估研究成果之學術或應用價值（簡要敘述成果所代表之意義、價值、影響或進一步發展之可能性）（以 500 字為限）

本研究主要貢獻在於：

1. 在個人主體性受到尊崇、社會結構影響減弱的文化氛圍中，母職如何被流行文本（婦嬰雜誌）建構；而
2. 其所產製的母職「知識」及其構連的意識型態如何編織無所不在的權力網絡，並透過無意識的規訓過程，滲透到母親的生活實踐之中；以及
3. 流行文本如何附庸或對抗各種母職論述的力量，如父權體制、女性主義、科學霸權、常民知識、資本主義、後現代女性主體性與能動性