
Exploring Birthing Identities and Iatrogenic Illness: Transitions to Motherhood

Susan Hogan^{*†1}

¹University of Derby – Arts and Health Centre for Excellence Kedleston Road Derby DE22 1GB,
United Kingdom

Abstract

People often give expression to their experience in metaphorical discourse, which can better conceptualise and articulate their situation. In ideological struggles metaphors are commonly used around a contested site of meaning. This can take the form of pictorial or linguistic strategies to establish one meaning rather than another. When one looks at pictures with this in mind they can be seen as providing women with a tool for carving out a self-identity which might challenge dominant or representations or those representations connected with their particular socio-economic or gender status (Hogan 1997; 2012).

Mothers giving birth may be viewed as ‘liminal’ entities because they straddle the line between purity and pollution; self and other; and indeed life and death (Hogan 2008 p. 141). The transition to motherhood, especially the birthing event, is a particularly contested site with regards to male/female power relations, and the application of practices; historically every aspect of the management of the event has been potentially highly inflammatory, and subject to rival proscriptions (Hogan 2008; Hogan 2012b; 2016). Iatrogenic illness is illness caused by hospital practices and is the result of protocols and procedures, which are counter-productive, yet, often ‘invisible’ or hard to challenge as they are the result of entrenched operations of power. This project explores how iatrogenic practices are implicated in post-natal distress.

The Birth Project[1] is working with a diverse range of new mothers to enable them to explore their experience of childbirth, and the transition to motherhood through a variety of creative mediums: images produced include those which both represent and defy cultural expectations.

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: s.hogan@derby.ac.uk