

“It’s My Body and My Life”: A Dialogued Collaborative Autoethnography

Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies
2015, Vol. 15(3) 224–232
© 2014 SAGE Publications
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1532708614562901
csc.sagepub.com



Alejandra Martinez¹ and Maria Marta Andreatta¹

Abstract

In this essay, we reflect on others’ perceptions of women who choose not to be mothers, and our own sensations and feelings in relation to people’s judgments about our own decision to remain childfree. We use a specific dynamic that we name dialogued collaborative autoethnography to address our personal stories within the social and cultural context.

Keywords

feminist qualitative research, autoethnography, performance ethnography

To begin with . . .

The observer: Maria Marta and Alejandra are colleagues and friends. They have PhDs and are full-time researchers at CONICET, the institution that governs scientific research in Argentina. They are middle-class, nonreligious, heterosexual women. Both are in their late 30s and have lived with their male partners for a long time. Maria Marta and Alejandra do not have children.

They meet every Wednesday to discuss Norman Denzin’s papers and books. Those meetings are precious for them. In those conversations, which always begin with a good cup of coffee, a chocolate muffin, and half an hour of getting up to date on each other’s news, a subject has come up many times: people inquiring, and urging each of them to get pregnant.

They chat:

- I met an old classmate yesterday. I hadn’t seen her in 20 years!
- No kidding! 20 years! And how did it go?
- Awful.
- What! Why?
- We were talking about work and life and suddenly she asked:
 - *So, how many kids do you have?*
 - *We don’t have any kids.*
 - *Oh, I’m sorry to hear that . . .*
 - *Don’t be, we just chose not to have any.*
 - *Sure, honey, of course.*
- Yeah . . . that really was awful . . .

Script I—The In-Laws: A Tragicomedy

Characters

Maria Marta as herself

Alejandra as herself

Mother-in-law

Father-in-law

Margaret Sanger (voice in off)

Simone de Beauvoir (voice in off)

Brothers, sisters, brothers in law, sisters in law, nieces and nephews (silent)

Scene I

Interior. The dining-room in a middle-class home. Maria Marta’s family-in-law (including parents, nieces and nephews, sisters and brothers-in-law), her husband, and herself are seated around the table, chatting after having pasta.

Maria Marta’s mother-in-law drinks some water from a green glass and looks at her:

Mother-in-law: So how old are you, honey?

Sudden silence. Everyone around the table stares at Maria Marta.

Maria Marta: I will be 27 soon.

¹CIECS-CONICET y UNC, Cordoba, Argentina

Corresponding Author:

Alejandra Martinez, CIECS-CONICET y UNC, 9 de julio 525 10 C, Cordoba, 5000, Argentina.

Email: martinezalej@hotmail.com

Mother-in-law: I'm so glad you are young! How come you caught a man that is 10 years older than you! (*The woman laughs*) Well, it doesn't matter, does it? The important thing is that you are young enough to give me a lot of grandchildren!

Maria Marta remains silent and smiles, politely. She plays nervously with an embroidered napkin that has tomato sauce stains. The rest of the family listens to the conversation while eating dessert.

Mother-in-law: So? When are you going to have a baby?
 Maria Marta (*laughs awkwardly*): Oh, well, it'll happen when the time is right, you know.
 Mother-in-law: Well, *now* is a good time, isn't it?
 Father-in-law: Sure it is! What are you waiting for, son? You must get her pregnant soon!

The scene freezes. Alejandra comes into the room and sits on an empty chair, next to Maria Marta.

Alejandra: So what did your ex-husband answer?

Maria Marta: Nothing, not a word. He already knew that he didn't want to have children, but he didn't dare tell that to his parents. So I couldn't say what I really thought, either.

Alejandra looks at Maria Marta, who rolls the edge of the napkin with her fingers.

Alejandra: How did you feel?

Maria Marta: I felt I was the victim of some kind of abuse. I mean, others imposing on me the way they live, their beliefs, their values, their personal desires—it's an abuse. I thought to myself: *It's my body and my life!! Can't you see it??* I just couldn't say it out loud . . . And I felt angry for not being able to say that openly, as if I was abnormal. Although I never felt abnormal, I always knew that others would see me in that way . . .

Now, I realize that most of my value in that family was strongly related to my capability to have children. In fact, when we divorced, my ex-husband told his parents that the problem with the relationship was that I didn't want to have children.

Alejandra: Would you like to leave now?

Maria Marta leaves the napkin on the table and leaves the room. The empty eyes of her ex-family-in-law follow her out.

Margaret Sanger (voice in off): [Every] woman should have the right over her own body and to say if she shall or if she shall not be a mother, as she sees fit! (1921).

Scene 2

Exterior. A garden party is taking place. It's the 15th birthday of Alejandra's niece-in-law. People are talking in small groups while they drink. It's a torrid summer night. Alejandra is sitting at a table with her mother-in-law, drinking a soda with lots of ice.

Mother in law: Did you see what a beautiful young lady my granddaughter is?

Alejandra: Oh, yes. She certainly is. And she is such a sweet person. I enjoy the time I spend with her.

The mother-in-law coughs delicately, and says—as if she had just thought about it . . .

Mother-in-law: How many years have my son and you been together?

Alejandra: Sixteen.

Mother-in-law: Oh . . . that long?

Alejandra: Yes, it's been quite a while.

Mother-in-law: So you could have already had a 13-year-old boy. You're lazy, aren't you? You could have a 13-year-old boy already . . .

Alejandra laughs awkwardly, and drinks.

The scene freezes. Maria Marta enters the scene with an astonished expression on her face and sits next to Alejandra.

Maria Marta: Why do you think she says this kind of thing? I mean, what's the point?

Alejandra: My mother-in-law is 84. She was raised with the conviction that achieving a good marriage and having children is the best that can happen to a woman. For her, desire and pleasure don't seem to be sufficient justification for deciding to leave the path of social success . . . Some years ago, when she was younger (and I was younger) she didn't say a word about the decision we had made, and I guess it was because I still had many years of biological capability ahead. She may have thought it was a matter of time. Now she's aging, I am almost forty, and her threshold of diplomacy is plummeting . . .

Maria Marta: I understand . . . Let's get a stronger drink.

Alejandra gets up and leaves the scene with Maria Marta. The mother-in-law remains seated, thinking of her grandchildren.

Simone de Beauvoir (voice in off): The body is not a thing, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and our sketch of our project (1972).

Script 2—The Gynecologist: A Tragedy

Characters

Alejandra as herself
 Maria Marta as herself
 Gynecologist (female)
 Margaret Sanger (voice in off)

Scene 1

*Interior. The doctor's office. On the table there is a bronze sign that says: "Dr. Sanchez, gynecologist."
 After reading Maria Marta's medical reports the woman smiles and looks at her patient. The doctor's long blonde hair follows every movement of her head.*

Doctor: Excellent! Maria Marta, you seem to be very healthy.

Maria Marta: Well, that's good news, thank you!

Doctor: So, I can see right here that you have just turned 37, is that correct?

Maria Marta: Yes, that's correct.

Doctor: So we should begin planning your pregnancy, right? Are you planning to have a baby this year?

Maria Marta: Actually, no, I'm not.

The doctor's eyes open exaggeratedly while she takes her eyeglasses off.

Doctor: Well, Maria Marta, you are not getting any younger, you know. You must do it . . . you must get pregnant even if you're not convinced! You're in your late 30s, and it's better to do it now and not be sorry later.

Maria Marta remains silent, feeling anger growing inside of her.

Doctor: I hope you change your mind!

The scene freezes and Alejandra comes in.

Alejandra: How did you feel back then?

Maria Marta: Angry! I was so angry! Actually, I never went there again. She seemed to completely ignore the fact that my partner and I have decided not to have children. For some reason, she didn't respect my feelings and my beliefs.

Alejandra: What beliefs support your decision?

Maria Marta: I believe that having children is a choice you can make in life. I guess I owe it to my parents. They never put pressure on me to be a mother. So, I've always thought that I

don't need to be a mother in order to be a happy person, or to grow up, or to be an adult.

Alejandra remains in silence for a while, thinking about what to say next.

Maria Marta (*mumbles to herself*): Should I report the doctor for abuse of authority? I'm confused. I wonder if this is usual in gynecologists' practices. It shouldn't be!

Alejandra: Have you ever questioned yourself, or regretted remaining childfree?

Maria Marta: No, never. I know this is what I want. I recognize that sometimes I wonder what I would do if someday in the future my partner changed his mind and wanted a child. I guess we'd separate. I wouldn't like that happen, but I think it's better than having a child for the wrong reasons.

Simone de Beauvoir (voice in off): Enforced maternity brings into the world wretched infants, whom their parents will be unable to support and who will become the victims of public care or "child martyrs." It must be pointed out that our society, so concerned to defend the rights of the embryo, shows no interest in the children once they are born (1972).

Scene 2

Interior. On one side of the room there is an exam table, an ultrasound machine, and some medical instruments on a white table. On the other side, there is a desk and two chairs. It is a gynecologist's office. Dr. Perez is asking about Alejandra's medical history because it is her first appointment.

Doctor: Age?

Alejandra: 38 years old.

The doctor writes it down and, suddenly, she asks:

Doctor: And babies, when will you get pregnant?

Alejandra (*feeling annoyed*): I won't have babies, I've decided that.

The doctor drops the pen and stares at Alejandra.

Doctor: But why not? . . . Oh no, no, don't make that mistake. Childless women get fat, get old sooner, and they get bitter and ugly. You have to have at least one child!

Alejandra does not know what to say. So she lies.

Alejandra: I'm an only child and I don't like it. I don't want to have an only child.

Doctor: Then you can have little twins!

The scene freezes and Alejandra says to Maria Marta, who is sitting on the exam table:

Oh yeah, as if that could be arranged.

Maria Marta laughs.

Maria Marta: How do you think that she reached those conclusions? “Childless women get fat, get old sooner, and they get bitter and ugly.” I don’t think these have been scientifically proven.

Alejandra: I guess she is very messed up and that she has a problem with her own motherhood. I’m really pissed.

Maria Marta: Let’s get out of here and file a complaint for abuse of authority.

Margaret Sanger (voice in off): Our first step is to have the backing of the medical profession so that . . . motherhood may be the function of dignity and choice, rather than one of ignorance and chance! (1921).

Script 3—Encounters With People We Barely Know: A Satyr

Characters

Alejandra as herself

Maria Marta as herself

Classmate (female)

Person number 2

Simone de Beauvoir (voice in off)

Person number 1 (silent)

Scene 1

Interior. The dojo (practice space for martial arts). Alejandra and her only female classmate at kickboxing class chat during a break.

Alejandra: Is your son doing fine?

Classmate: He’s got a cold, but he’ll be ok soon. And how about you? When are you going to have a baby?

Alejandra: I’ve decided I won’t.

Classmate: You won’t, like . . . for now?

Alejandra: I won’t, never.

Awkward silence. Alejandra feels she must explain something.

Alejandra: We have a crazy life, you know, we travel a lot, we live here and there . . . We just have a plant. I water it and it lives, it misses me though.

They laugh, awkwardly.

The scene freezes. Maria Marta enters the scene.

Maria Marta: Why do you think people usually feel awkward when we answer that we will never have kids?

Alejandra: I think people don’t see the “never” answer coming. I guess they expect a “normal” answer (like “oh, well, as soon as I finish school”) so when we say “I won’t have children,” something in the other person’s mental schemes cracks. We are answering something that goes in opposition to all the social structures of doing-as-expected. So they don’t know what to say, and usually they say something as awkward as how they feel. It seems that individuals that dare to abandon the social path of “legitimate normalcy” make the other people feel uncomfortable.

Maria Marta: And why do you feel you must explain something?

Alejandra: I was raised in the social pattern that claims that the normal expectation for a woman is being a mother, so I think that’s why I feel I must say something about not having kids when I’m asked. The look of the other arouses the feeling of not being completely in-line with society, so a red light turns on in my brain that says: Release the pressure! Say something funny! Look normal!

Scene 2

Interior. The living room of a lovely apartment. It is person 1’s birthday party and Maria Marta has been invited. She chats with a bunch of colleagues from work.

Person 2: I consider myself a very warm-hearted person. I respect and love all living things. Do you like animals, Maria Marta?

Maria Marta: I love animals! My partner and I have four cats.

Person 2: And no kids?

Maria Marta: No.

Person 2: Then you are replacing children with cats. Be adults and have children!

Maria Marta: Well, we know the difference between cats and children. You may think we don’t—that we are a mad or, at least, a confused couple—but you are wrong.

Maria Marta (to herself): We love cats, probably because we’ve grown up in houses full of cats, dogs and, sometimes, other

animals. We know the difference between cats and babies. We don't need guidance from others on that . . . fortunately!

Simone de Beauvoir (in off): That the child is the supreme aim of woman is a statement having precisely the value of an advertising slogan (1972).

Reflecting on Others' Perceptions of Childfree Women

Although second wave feminism struggled to liberate women from representations around gender regulation that tend to place men and women in differentiated social spaces (Gordon, 2013), the association *woman* = *mother* is still one of the least questioned, and is a social, cultural, religious, and political product. Second wave feminism drew attention to "the pervasiveness of the ideology of pronatalism which normalizes the assumption that everyone should want to have children" (Moore, 2014, p. 160). However, in Western culture, motherhood is considered a parameter for female identity (Gordon, 2013; Rich, Taket, Graham, & Shelley, 2011). Thus, the decision of becoming a mother or not may be one of the most "important choices in a woman's life, as motherhood is crucial for her gender identity, self-esteem, well-being, social and economic position and others' judgment about her" (Peterson & Engwall, 2013, pp. 376-377). Choosing not to have children is, therefore, associated with immaturity and/or infertility (Gillespie, 2003).

Childbearing is still considered as an entrance to adulthood and a need every woman has at a certain moment of her life (Gold, 2013; Moore, 2014; Rich et al., 2011). Choosing not to have children is seen as unnatural and deviant (Blackstone & Dyer Stewart, 2012; Peterson & Engwall, 2013; Tanturri & Mencarini, 2008) because typically, as Gayle Rubin (1998) says, in Western societies women are placed at the reproductive pole of the axis that organizes the division of labor; this implies that the female qualities are emotionality, dependency, private space, and passivity. As Gillespie (2003) states, "pronatalist cultural discourses establish a template of femininity, whereby motherhood is perceived to be the cornerstone of adult femininity and the desire for motherhood and the role of mothering central to what it means to be a woman" (p. 123).

In opposition to those significances around the feminine, the senses associated with men are related to production, activity, independence, public space, rationality, and aggressiveness (Connell, 2005; Kaufman & Brod, 1994; Kimmel, 1987; Pelias, 2007). In social representations of "traditional marital role expectations in Western society, adults would mate, and 'love, marriage and parenthood eventually came to be construed as the normal order of things'" (Nichols & Pace-Nichols, 2000 in Gold, 2013, p. 224). It should be

noted that we were born and grew up in Argentina where, as in other Latin American countries, these representations are strongly supported by a pronatalist culture heavily influenced by the Catholic Church (Brown, 2008; Garcia & Espinosa, 2011).

Following Rich et al. (2011), Agrillo and Nelini (2008), Letherby and Williams (1999), Gillespie (2003), Blackstone and Dyer Stewart (2012), and Warren and Pals (2013), we have decided to use the term "childfree" to indicate that somebody has decided not to have children voluntarily, and the term "childless" for those who desire to have children, but cannot for biological reasons. Rich et al. describe the differences in perceptions toward childfree and childless women:

Women involuntarily childless through infertility have been stereotyped as sad, suffering, desperate and "victims" of childlessness and have experienced being reprimanded for their childlessness and failure to achieve motherhood status, whilst concurrently being scrutinized for their "obsessive" desire to have children. Voluntarily childless women have often been perceived as selfish, self-centred and materialistic, and have experienced being met with shock, pity, criticism and hostility in light of their voluntary childlessness. (p. 227)

Moore (2014) says that scholarly interest in voluntary childlessness "shifted focus from eugenics to feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s" (p. 160), by the time that second wave feminism arose around the world. Research in the field of nonmotherhood has shown that childfree women suffer considerable stigmatization, related to negative stereotypes, being seen by others as selfish, abnormal, unwomanly, childish, neurotic, and cold (Gillespie, 2000; Vinson, Mollen, & Grant Smith, 2010). Childfree and childless women are seen very differently by society, but both share the weight of discredit just because they fail to comply with "legitimate" social regulations.

Dialogued Collaborative Autoethnography

In this essay, we reflect on others' perceptions of women who choose not to be mothers, and our own sensations and feelings in relation to people's judgments concerning our own decision to remain childfree. We use a specific dynamic that we name dialogued collaborative autoethnography to address our personal stories within the social and cultural context.

As we do in every autoethnography we write, we abandon all pretenses of objectivity and neutrality (Ellis, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2003). Autoethnographic texts include emotion, action, introspection, self-consciousness, and the body itself. The decision of being a mother or not, does, too.

Drawing on third wave feminism, we use first-person-writing as a critical method and practice to show other women that their own "experiences of oppression or discrimination

are not isolated" (Yu, 2011, p. 877). This essay could have been written from different perspectives, but we chose autoethnography as a way to expose our feelings, doubts, fears, and embodied anxiety (Ellis, 2009; Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013) in an effort to "undermine, refute and contradict dominant views" (Yu, 2011, p. 884). Yes, the personal is political.

Not only do we write autoethnographically but also collaboratively: This text is "the co-production of an autoethnographic text by two . . . writers separated by . . . distance" (Denzin, 2013, p. 125). At the moment we write, Maria Marta is in Cordoba, Argentina, and Alejandra in Champaign, USA. Despite the distance, both of us are seeking to shed light on a subject that, despite the enormous progress of women in almost all social spaces, remains stigmatizing.

Drawing on Norman Denzin (2014), by writing together, we write ourselves "into each other's life, sharing identities, co-producing a critical consciousness, imagining new politics of possibility" (p. 27). As duoethnographers do, we seek to create "disruptive, emergent, dialogic, transformative narratives" and by doing so we critique "the relationship between the personal, the political, and the historical" (Denzin in Wyatt et al., 2014, p. 413). Writing collaboratively we seek to "challenge, and open possibilities both in the academy and the wider world" (Wyatt & Gale, 2014, p. 295).

When we write "perched on the other's shoulder,"¹ interacting with each other's texts, we "perform new writing practices, blurring fact and fiction, challenging the dividing line between biography, history, writing, autobiography, memory, performer, performed, observer, and observed" (Denzin, 2014, p. 28). By writing collaboratively, we seek to retell and reperform "these life experiences as they intersect in these sites" (Denzin in Wyatt et al., 2014, p. 413). As Saldanha and Klopfer (2014), we "recognized in each other's stories the discomfort each of us experienced" in terms of having decided not to become mothers (p. 324).

Drawing on duoethnography, "a collaborative research methodology in which two or more researchers juxtapose their life histories in order to provide multiple understandings of a social phenomenon" (Norris & Sawyer in Denzin, 2014), we use a writing dynamic that is new to us and that we have named *dialogued collaborative autoethnography*. It is organized in stages: (a) Each of us wrote an autoethnographical text, which reflected our feelings and sensations in relation to others' perceptions on our decision to remain childfree; (b) Then we read each other's autoethnographical text, and asked each other questions. Those questions were triggered by our texts. We call those questions "reactions," as—as happens in a theater play—almost any dialogue can be understood in terms of action-reaction; (c) We answered the questions we asked each other, and so a dialogue was built, which is, on one hand, autoethnographical and, on the other hand, the result of reactions, in which we were

"surprised" by thematic triggers that we had not anticipated during the autoethnographic stage. The last step, (d) was the performative reconstruction of events in each other's lives.

We wrote three scripts in which we are the main characters, showing real experiences that happened to each of us. Maria Marta wrote Alejandra's scenes and Alejandra, Maria Marta's. Reconstructing each other's life situations, we immersed ourselves in the lived experience of the other, and we reflected on it from the perspective of an observer who pictures the other's story from her own point of view, and from the social schemes that have shaped our own ways of perceiving and evaluating the world.

Norman Denzin (2013) says autoethnography retells and reperforms significant life experiences, and thus the life story becomes a "re-presentation, an historical object often ripped or torn of its contexts and recontextualized in the spaces and understandings of the story" (p. 126). When we incorporate another person's questions into autoethnographical texts and then answer them, we are forced to return to the social context that has inspired such stories. When we perform the other person's story, we make that story our own, and it allows us to deeply understand that person's feelings and suffering.

We believe that shedding light on social reality demands a deep reflection on our own representations and points of view (Denzin, 2006; Ellis, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2003; Holman Jones, 2008; Spry, 2011). Doing so, we stress the idea that autoethnography "provides an apparatus to pose and engage the questions of our global lives" (Spry, 2011, p. 499) moving "outward to culture, discourse, history and ideology" (Denzin, 2014, p. x).

For space reasons, we have not transcribed here the whole dialogue that was the product of our autoethnographical writing and questioning, but we wished to emphasize two aspects that we believe are essential in the problem addressed: The perceptions of others in relation to women who choose not to be mothers, and our own sensations and feelings in relation to the judgments of others on our decision to remain childfree.

Last Thoughts

The second wave of feminism between 1960 and 1970 had a strong impact on attitudes toward nontraditional gender roles and family formation.

The predominantly white, predominantly middle-class women who began women's liberation had typically been unconscious of their own oppression and limited opportunities because they had accepted the gender system as a "natural" and inevitable outgrowth of their sex. (Gordon, 2013, p. 24)

Those women, who previously considered dedication to housework and family care as their only possibility in life,

began to participate in the paid workforce. Sexism was understood since then “much as the civil rights movement had taught them to understand racism: not as epiphenomena of capitalism but as autonomous economic and cultural structures” (Gordon, 2013, p. 23). Moreover, advances in contraceptive methods offered alternatives to motherhood (Gordon, 2013; Letherby & Williams, 1999). Deciding on one’s body and individual empowerment became two of the most important aspects of discussion among second wave feminists, and continue to be in the developments of Third Wave of Feminism (Coleman, 2009; Dean, 2009; Lemaster, 2012; Yu, 2011).

Despite the advance of women into previously restricted social spaces, a negative and derogatory perception toward childfree women remains. Choosing to be childfree is still seen as “deviant, unfeminine, and an unhealthy choice for women; one that transgresses traditional constructions of femininity” (Gillespie, 2003, p. 123). Voluntarily childfree women are often viewed as selfish, while involuntarily childless women frequently incur pity (Letherby & Williams, 1999).

The resistance to the acceptance of women’s choosing not to have children is a sign that the stalled revolution (Wainerman, 2007) continues and is in good health. These resistances—and the discourse they produce—are a source of suffering for those who choose a different path rather than motherhood. We hope that this article contributes to the understanding that being a woman *is not* to be a mother, in the same way as manhood is not associated with fatherhood.

When we write about our experiences *we feel (again) the pain* of unfairly being considered deviant, selfish, lazy, weird, and immature. We also get in touch with fears that are successfully inoculated by the institutions of Western societies: among others, aging and dying alone, regretting nonmotherhood, and eventually missing the intense feelings that come with motherhood and grandmotherhood. As harsh as those feelings are to us, these reflections are important as we seek to achieve “clarity, connection and change” (Holman Jones, 2008, p. 207). Drawing on Denzin (in Wyatt et al., 2014), we believe that “collaborative writing is about writers being present in the moment, writing from the soul, constructing a space where selves flow together, being vulnerable, pushing always for connections between personal troubles and public issues” (p. 414).

Writing autoethnography is our way to contribute to a world in which women and men can make their own decisions freely and in peace. We follow Norman Denzin (2014) as, with this collaborative text, we seek “to facilitate civic transformations in the public and private spheres,” ratifying the dignities of the self and honoring personal struggle as “in the moment of co-performance, lives are joined and struggle begins anew” (p. 81).

The observer: It’s noon and Maria Marta and Alejandra close their notepads reluctantly. Time flies on those Denzin-reading Wednesdays. They wish they could stay more time, but they have a million different activities in store for the rest of the day.

After a moment of silence they speak:

- It isn’t easy, you know, deciding not to be a mother.
- I know . . . the expectations, the pressure, the stupid jokes . . .
- And the constant warning: “Aren’t you afraid of dying alone?”
- “Don’t you think you will regret it, someday, when it’s too late?”
- I’d rather regret being childfree and standing my own personal pain, than bearing a child with regrets . . .
- . . . of being a mother . . .
- . . . who just doesn’t wish to be a mother.

Maria Marta and Alejandra hug each other goodbye, until their next meeting that, as always, will begin with a nice cup of coffee, a chocolate muffin, and a warm conversation between good friends.

Acknowledgment

Thank you, Dr. Denzin for inspiration and encouragement. Your books and articles have changed our lives.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. This is a wonderful expression by Norman Denzin.

References

- Agrillo, C., & Nelini, C. (2008). Childfree by choice: A review. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 25, 347-363.
- Blackstone, A., & Dyer Stewart, M. (2012). Choosing to be childfree: Research on the decision not to parent. *Sociology Compass*, 6, 718-727.
- Brown, J. L. (2008). Los derechos (no)reproductivos en Argentina: Encrucijadas teóricas y políticas [(Non)Reproductive rights in Argentina: Theoretical and political crossroads]. *Cadernos Pagu*, 30, 269-300.
- Coleman, J. (2009). An introduction to feminisms in a postfeminist age. *Women’s Studies Journal*, 23(2), 3-13.

- Connell, R. (2005). *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Dean, J. (2009). Who's afraid of third wave feminism? On the uses of the "third wave" in British feminist politics. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11, 334-352.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1972). *The second sex*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.
- Denzin, N. (2006). Analytic autoethnography, or déjà vu all over again. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35, 419-428.
- Denzin, N. (2013). Interpretive autoethnography. In S. Holman Jones, T. Adams, & C. Ellis, *Handbook of autoethnography* (pp. 123-142). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Denzin, N. (2014). *Interpretive autoethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, C. (2009). Fighting back or moving on: An autoethnographic response to critics. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 2, 371-378.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2003). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 733-768). Walnut Creek, CA: Sage.
- Garcia, G., & Espinosa, E. (2011). Mujeres y ciudadanía: discursos y representaciones sobre "identidades femeninas" en la historia reciente argentina. Iglesia católica y mujeres en movimiento [Women and citizenship: Discourses and representations of "female identity" in Argentinean recent history. Catholic Church and women in movement]. *Revista Punto Género*, 1, 271-288.
- Gillespie, R. (2000). When no means no: Disbelief, disregard and deviance as discourses of voluntary childlessness. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23, 223-234.
- Gillespie, R. (2003). Childfree and feminine: Understanding the gender identity of voluntarily childless women. *Gender & Society*, 17, 122-136.
- Gold, J. (2013). The experiences of childfree and childless couples in a pronatalistic society: Implications for family counselors. *The Family Journal*, 21, 223-229.
- Gordon, L. (2013). Socialist feminism: The legacy of the "second wave." *New Labor Forum*, 22(3), 20-22.
- Holman Jones, S. (2008). Autoethnography: Making the personal political. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 205-246). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Holman Jones, S., Adams, T., & Ellis, C. (2013). *Handbook of autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Kauffman, M., & Brod, H. (1994). *Theorizing masculinities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kimmel, M. (1987). *Changing men: New directions in research on men and masculinity*. London, UK: Sage.
- Lemaster, T. (2012). "Girl with a pen": Girls' studies and third-wave feminism in a room of one's own and "professions for women". *Feminist Formations*, 24, 77-99.
- Letherby, G., & Williams, C. (1999). Non-motherhood: Ambivalent autobiographies. *Feminist Studies*, 25, 719-728.
- Moore, J. (2014). Reconsidering childfreedom: A feminist exploration of discursive identity construction. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 37, 159-180.
- Pelias, R. (2007). Jarheads, girly men, and the pleasures of violence. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(7), 945-959.
- Peterson, H., & Engwall, K. (2013). Silent bodies: Childfree women's gendered and embodied experiences. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 20, 376-389.
- Rich, S., Taket, A., Graham, M., & Shelley, J. (2011). "Unnatural," "unwomanly," "uncreditable" and "undervalued": The significance of being a childless woman in Australian society. *Gender Issues*, 28, 226-247.
- Rubin, G. (1998). "El tráfico de mujeres: notas sobre la 'economía política' del sexo" [Women trafficking: Notes on the "political economy" of sex]. In Navarro M. & Stimpson C. (eds.) *¿Qué son los estudios de mujeres? [What are women studies?]* (pp. 15-75). Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Saldanha, K., & Klopfer, L. (2014). On seeing monkeys, cows, and beggars: Between ethnography and tourism. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 14, 324-332.
- Sanger, M. (1921, November). *The morality of birth control* (Speech). New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/PDFFiles/Margaret%20Sanger%20-%20The%20Morality%20of%20Birth%20Control.pdf>
- Spry, T. (2011). Performative autoethnography: Critical embodiments and possibilities. In N. Denzin & I. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 497-512). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tanturri, M. L., & Mencarini, L. (2008). Childless or childfree? Paths to voluntary childlessness in Italy. *Population and Development Review*, 34, 51-77.
- Vinson, C., Mollen, D., & Grant Smith, N. (2010). Perceptions of childfree women: The role of perceivers and targets' ethnicity. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 20, 426-432.
- Wainerman, C. (2007). Familia, trabajo y relaciones de género [Family, work and gender relations]. In M. Carbonero Gamundi & S. Levin (Eds.), *Entre familia y trabajo—Relaciones, conflictos y políticas de género en Europa y América Latina* [Between family and work—Relationships, conflict and gender policies in Europe and Latin America] (pp. 147-177). Rosario, Argentina: Homo Sapiens.
- Waren, W., & Pals, H. (2013). Comparing characteristics of voluntarily childless men and women. *Journal of Population Research*, 30, 151-170.
- Wyatt, J., & Gale, K. (2014). Introduction to the special issue on collaborative writing as method of inquiry. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 14, 295-297.
- Wyatt, J., Gale, K., Gannon, S., Davies, B., Denzin, N., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2014). Deleuze and collaborative writing: Responding to/with "JKSB." *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 14, 407-416.
- Yu, S. (2011). Reclaiming the personal: Personal narratives of third-wave feminists. *Women's Studies*, 40, 873-889.

Author Biographies

Alejandra Martinez has a Doctorate in Social Sciences (Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina) and a Master's degree

in Sociology (Universidad Nacional de Cordoba, Argentina). She also has a Bachelor's degree in Advertising (Universidad Siglo 21, Cordoba, Argentina). She is currently a researcher at the National Council of Research in Science and Technique (CONICET, Argentina). Between 2013 and 2014 she was a postdoctoral Fulbright grantee at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Maria Marta Andreatta has a Doctorate in Health Sciences and a Bachelor's degree in Nutrition (Universidad Nacional de Cordoba, Argentina). She is currently a researcher at the National Council of Research in Science and Technique (CONICET, Argentina). She conducts qualitative research in the field of food and health at the Center of Research and Studies on Culture and Society (CIECS, Cordoba, Argentina).