

FEM 6999

Master's Major Research Paper

Submitted to Professors

K. Trevenen – *Supervisor*  
S. Magnet – *Second Reader*

***'Bump Watch' and the Surveillance of Women's Bodies***

Tara Lynn Guenette  
3277983

April 1, 2011

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Method	3
Part one – Theoretical Groundings	5
Part two – Media Analysis	28
• Bump Watch and Mass Media Culture – The Example of Bethenny Frankel	28
• Surveillance and Monitoring of Maternal Bodies Through Technology – The Bump Watch iPhone Application	36
• New Media, Old Message – Bump Watch, Breastfeeding, And the Imperative of Slenderness	42
Conclusion	50
Works Cited	52
Appendix – Figures Analyzed in this Paper	I

## *'Bump Watch' and the Surveillance of Women's Bodies*

### **Introduction**

What does it mean to be a woman? What does it mean to be a mother, or a pregnant woman? Women's bodies are public bodies, and at no time is this more evident than when a woman is pregnant. Once a woman's body is socially read as 'pregnant,' in addition to being read as 'woman,' a new set of rules, prescriptions, and surveillance are thrust upon her. For example, this is evident in public health messaging about what activities pregnant women should and should not engage in. These social prescriptions and surveillance are tied to the phenomenon of bump watch. *Bump watch* is a colloquial term used to describe the act of surveying women who may or may not be pregnant<sup>1</sup>. It is the media's monitoring of a woman's physical form to judge whether or not she is pregnant. Bump watch has generally been reserved to celebrities in the media but has in some respects filtered down to everyday Western society in our workplaces and families. In the event of female celebrities, it is exercised through a variety of mediums, such as print, television and the web as a way of policing women's bodies in two ways. Firstly, bump watch subjects women into conforming to Western ideals of feminine beauty and thinness by constantly monitoring their physique. Secondly, if a pregnancy is confirmed, it is used to coerce women into performative 'healthy' and 'appropriate' pregnancies and babies. While the surveillance technique of bump watch is used on both pregnant and non-pregnant women, this paper will largely focus on its application to pregnant women.

---

<sup>1</sup> In my research, I did not come across a scholarly definition of bump watch. This is my suggested definition, based on my reading of texts such as print magazines and online publications.

For my major research paper, I will discuss this policing of women's bodies using a variety of theorists to explore how pregnant and maternal bodies are read as signs, and what this means for all women. For the theoretical groundings for this paper, I will draw upon theorists such as Andrea Smith, Sherene Razack, Susan Bordo, and others to provide a feminist and interlocking critique of the discourses of pregnancy and motherhood, and will weave Foucault's notions of Panopticism, surveillance, and biopower throughout my analysis.

Following my explanation of the theoretical groundings for this paper, I will then analyze three recent cultural and media texts to examine how bump watch is becoming a powerful discursive tool, and a means of surveillance of Western women. The first example I will analyze is the rise of reality television personality Bethenny Frankel. Frankel is an example of the rise of bump watch in mass media culture, as her very public pregnancy and motherhood are part of the new media's interest in formerly personal aspects of women's lives. The second media text I will analyze is a recently devised application created for the Apple iPhone, the Bump Watch app. I will examine how the Bump Watch app is an example of the social surveillance thrust upon pregnant women. The final media text I will analyze is an Internet video clip about breastfeeding, which, although not explicitly about pregnancy, uses similar discursive practices as bump watch in employing images and discourse asserting the supremacy of breastfeeding in terms of efficiency, cost benefits, and social and cultural benefits. Throughout my analysis of these texts I will be examining who the discursive subject is, who the target audience is, and analyze the impacts of who is left out, in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and age.

## Method

My analysis in this major research paper is based on two foundational theorists, Michel Foucault and Sherene Razack, without whom the theoretical and methodological groundings for this paper would be lacking. From Foucault, I borrow his theories of Panopticism, surveillance, docile bodies, and biopower, and from a methodological standpoint, I will be using discourse analysis to analyze my chosen media texts. Discourse analysis provides a method to examine bump watch as Foucault argued that discourse is both shaped by, and shapes, our social views of knowledge and power. Therefore the discourse surrounding bump watch and the discursive practices of bump watch create a new type of knowledge and power; knowledge of women's bodies and power over women's bodies.

Following my use of Foucault's discourse analysis, I will use Sherene Razack's theory of interlocking oppressions as fundamental to my analysis. Razack states:

The theme of interlocking oppressions, as opposed to additive analysis (whereby some women are worse off), is an important aspect of examining complicity and one that makes it a different analytical framework from other theories of social relations or rights critiques. (Razack 135)

As such, throughout my analysis I will use Razack's theory of interlocking oppressions in order to provide a more fulsome analysis of the differential impacts of bump watch on women of different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds as well as different sexualities, ages, and abilities.

While Foucault and Razack are somewhat disparate on paper, their theories do not preclude one another, and in fact Razack's notion of interlocking oppressions adds an important lens to Foucault's work, which has been critiqued for being too focused on the lived experiences of white men.

Following Haraway, I also agree with and argue for a non-essentialist version of standpoint theory. According to Haraway:

A standpoint is not an empiricist appeal to or by 'the oppressed', but a cognitive, psychological and political tool for more adequate knowledge judged by the non-essentialist, historically contingent, situated standards of strong objectivity. Such a standpoint is the always fraught but necessary fruit of the practice of oppositional and differential consciousness. A feminist standpoint is a practical technology rooted in yearning, not an abstract philosophical foundation. (Haraway 47)

As a feminist scholar, I feel it is important to acknowledge my standpoint. I am a young, middle-class, able-bodied heterosexual woman, and acknowledge the privilege that I gain from these interlocking factors. My ethnic background is a bit more complicated, as I identify as an Aboriginal woman with ancestry of Algonquin, Irish and French Canadian descent. However, I am socially read as a white woman, and acknowledge that I benefit from and (unconsciously) participate in matrixes of white privilege. I have also had the privilege of growing up in a wealthy, developed, and democratic nation; and must acknowledge the privilege I have acquired due to my place of birth. My analysis in this paper is limited to women in the West, primarily North America, as this is where media employing bump watch tactics are popular in both print media and online. While I acknowledge this limitation in scope, this does not necessarily preclude women from other areas of the world from the reaches of bump watch, but further research on this topic would be required before making a definitive statement.

The three media texts that I have chosen to examine in part two are reflective of the discursive practices of bump watch in different ways and to varying degrees. The first example is the media persona of a real person, reality television personality Bethenny Frankel. Frankel is an interesting example of bump watch in that she has largely

participated in her own surveillance through documenting her pregnancy on two reality television programs. Another interesting aspect of her public persona is that Frankel, converse to other celebrities under the surveillance of bump watch who appeared pregnant prior to confirming their pregnancy, was not visibly pregnant or 'showing' when she was 'outed' as pregnant on the Internet. Rather than stay mum on the topic and allow people to continue to speculate about her alleged pregnancy, Frankel confirmed the story in the press. It is debatable if by confirming her pregnancy Frankel took control of the bump watch thrust upon her, or whether she merely sped up the process of the media monitoring of her bodily changes.

The second example of bump watch I have chosen to examine is an application created for Apple's iPhone called the Bump Watch app. This application allows users to track important events in their pregnancies, including expected delivery dates, medical appointments, and provides them with support and advice. However, it also includes tools that can count contractions and other aspects of labour and delivery, making it an interesting example of both a helpful tool to new parents and an example of new media tools being used for their surveillance capabilities. This is linked to the third example of bump watch I will examine, which is an Internet video discussing the benefits of breastfeeding, and urging women to join the "boob-olution". The video employs powerful messaging about not only the health benefits of breastfeeding to both mother and infant, but also the potential costs savings to the state if more women breastfed, and the calorie-burning potential of breastfeeding in order to return women to their pre-pregnancy selves. This video is an important example of Foucault's notion of the creation of docile bodies, in that messaging about proper training are emphasized in the video.

## Part one – Theoretical groundings

Before delving in to my analysis of pregnancy, media, and surveillance, it is important to firstly discuss the hegemonic status of traditional motherhood in Western society. The discourse of traditional motherhood and the family are very strongly rooted in Western society. Although feminist ideology has long challenged the hegemonic status of motherhood as the only socially-prescribed role for women, a role “that relegate[s] women to the domestic arena of private/public dichotomies and that rely on the ideological conflation of family, woman, reproduction, and nurturance”, this discourse remains (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 550). Although the conflation of womanhood and motherhood may be ideologically dangerous, Audre Lorde states that there is also power inherent in women’s nurturance:

For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered. It is this real connection, which is so feared by a patriarchal world. For it is only under a patriarchal structure that maternity is the only social power open to women. (Lorde, 98-99)

I agree with Lorde that patriarchy is at the centre of our views about motherhood and specifically the cultural hegemony of motherhood in Western society. Let us firstly examine the cultural institution of motherhood. Why motherhood, and what is motherhood?

Scholarly work on mothering focuses on the person who does the relational and logistical work of child rearing. Definitions of mothering share a theme: the social practices of nurturing and caring for dependent children. Mothering, thus, involves dynamic activity and always-evolving relationships. (Arendell 1192)

This quote is from Terry Arendell’s article, “Conceiving and Investigating Motherhood: The Decade's Scholarship,” in which Arendell states that motherhood is conceived as “[m]ultifaceted and complex, mothering is symbolically laden, representing what often is

characterized as the ultimate in relational devotion” (Arendell 1192). Individual women, once they become mothers, arguably gain membership to a new social group. This new social group is one in which Arendell states that they, as mothers “share, by definition and condition, a set of activities even though they vary as individuals and across culture” (Arendell 1194). She states that mothering is associated universally with women, and that it is bound to notions of femininity (Arendell 1192). She notes that motherhood has been assumed to be the primary identity for women since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that “womanhood and motherhood are treated as synonymous identities and categories of experience, [...] [y]et not all women mother, and mothering as nurturing and caring work is not inevitably the exclusive domain of women” (Arendell 1192).

Our essentialized ideologies and discourses about motherhood cannot be dissected from the culture in which we live. Arendell states that “mothering and motherhood are viewed as dynamic social interactions and relationships located in a societal context organized by gender and in accord with the prevailing gender belief system” (Arendell 1193). As posited by Arendell, maternal discourses and practices are historically variable, and I would add largely contextual (Arendell 1193). As Arendell states, our examination should not be in regards to the fact “that women, as females, have the capacity to conceive, gestate, give birth, and lactate, but that some women engage in the ongoing, demanding activities of childrearing and nurture” (Arendell 1193). While the focus of this paper is not why some women choose to mother and others choose not to, it is an interesting question and one that bears future examination.

Rather than relying on the dominant discourse of motherhood of generations past, Arendell argues that feminist examinations of motherhood have “opened up fresh

conceptualizations of mothering practices and of women's lives and family, more generally, and pushed for study of varied activities in relation and in contrast to the dominant ideologies of motherhood" (Arendell 1193-4). Although feminist examination and intervention has made room for new conceptualizations of motherhood, the predominant ideology of motherhood in Western culture is what Arendell calls "intensive mothering". Intensive mothering mandates that "mothering is exclusive, wholly child centered, emotionally involving, and time-consuming" (Arendell 1194). This is the Western ideal of the *good mother*, one that is "devoted to the care of others; she is self-sacrificing and 'not a subject with her own needs and interests'" (Arendell 1194). This notion of ideal motherhood is inextricably linked to notions of ideal womanhood, and is further impacted by the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality and ability. The notion of ideal motherhood reinforces the hegemonic status of the "White, middle-class heterosexual couple with its children in a self-contained family unit" (Arendell 1194). Western culture and mainstream media support this conventional motherhood, and thus reinforce all of the discriminations inherent within it. Additionally, although women of colour are excluded from the discourse of the good mother through white privilege, they are bound to its conventions and are under more scrutiny due to racial discrimination. Similarly, poor women, queer women, disabled women, and women who society deems either too young or too old to mother are under additional scrutiny about their fitness and suitability as mothers. Cultural assumptions about motherhood and specifically notions of who is fit to mother are based on and influenced by what Razack calls interlocking oppressions (Razack 135).

The ideal of the good mother is a highly gendered task for women, and one that requires, as Judith Butler would argue, a *performative* account of gender. Gender is performative in that:

[It] is in no way a stable identity of locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time- an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (Butler 402)

Not only does a pregnant woman or mother have to perform her gender as woman, but she is also prescribed new gender imperatives to perform once she is read as pregnant and even further performative requirements once she becomes a mother. She must be dutiful, nurturing, and doting to her children or fetus, otherwise she is not performing a highly important social script. If a mother does not conform to this essentialized type of motherhood, according to Arendell, she is labeled as deviant:

A variety deviancy discourses derive from this ideological construct of mothering- the mother absorbed in nurturing activities and situated in the biological nuclear family. The discourses are targeted, albeit differentially, at mothers who do not conform to the script of full-time motherhood in the context of marriage. Single mothers, welfare mothers, minority mothers, immigrant mothers, and lesbian mothers- often overlapping but not mutually exclusive categories- are subjects of deviancy discourses of mothering. (Arendell 1195)

If there is only one type of appropriate motherhood, i.e. white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied, and biologically tied to her child(ren), what about all of the mothers who do not fit neatly into these boxes, and whose deviancy challenges the hegemonic status of the good mother? Deviancy from the norm of the good mother may come at a price, as we will see later in Bordo and Smith's analysis of racialized pregnant women.

Our ideas about pregnancy and motherhood are socially bound. As Susan Bordo notes, "[a]t different historical moments, out of the pressure of cultural, social and

material change new images and associations emerge” (Bordo 4). Yet there is “continuing historical power and pervasiveness of certain cultural images and ideology to which [... we are all] vulnerable” (Bordo 8). I would agree with Bordo’s statements, and would further argue that this links to Butler’s notion of performativity, as mothers and pregnant women must perform prescribed social scripts in order to be seen as ‘normal’ mothers and pregnant women. Although most performative scripts for pregnant women relate to notions of health and safety, for example, not drinking alcohol while pregnant, other scripts relate to the notion of pregnancy as an infinitely happy time for women. Indeed, happiness is a strict performative script for pregnant women, in that women must be happy about their pregnancies regardless of their possible discomfort and physical pain during pregnancy. While I cannot examine the notion of performative happiness in this paper, it is an interesting question that bears further research. I argue that pregnant women are especially under surveillance, as they are viewed as the gatekeepers to future generations. As I will examine, certain pregnant women are under further scrutiny, as a particular segment of the population is seen as more desirable to reproduce.

Turning to the pregnant woman’s subject position, Bordo has argued that pregnant women’s subjectivity has been largely erased by medical and legal doctrines (Bordo 75). She argues that although the male subject’s body is privileged in the law, the female subject’s body has no such protection. Subjectivity, she argues, “must be treated as invested with personal meaning, history, and value that are ultimately determinable only by the subject who lives ‘within it’” (Bordo 74). Pregnancy is an embodied, subjective state, yet pregnant women’s subjectivity is often diminished. Bordo states that women’s lack of informed consent and control over their own bodies diminishes their subject

position:

In contrast to all this privileging of the hallowed ground of “the subject’s” body is the casual and morally imperious approach medicine and law have taken to nonconsensual medical interference in the reproductive lives of women- particularly when they are of non-European descent, poor, or non-English speaking. In this arena we see racism, classism, and sexism interlock virulently [...]. (Bordo 75)

We can see these examples of sexism, racism, classism, and ableism intersect in practices of forced sterilization or other reproductive interventions and bodily invasions directed at women on social assistance (Bordo 76). She notes:

Turning to court-ordered obstetrical interventions- and these include forced cesarean sections, detention of women against their will, and intrauterine transfusions- the statistics make clear that in this culture the pregnant, poor woman (especially if she is of non-European descent- comes as close as a human being can get to being regarded, medically and legally, as “mere body,” her wishes, desires, dreams, religious scruples of little consequence and easily ignored in (the doctor’s or judge’s estimation of) the interests of fetal well-being. (Bordo 76)

Further, she states:

The nature of pregnancy is such, however, that to deprive the woman of control over her reproductive life- whether by means of involuntary or coerced sterilization, court-ordered cesarean, or forbidden abortion- is necessarily also to mount an assault on her personal integrity and autonomy (the essence of personhood in our culture) and to treat her merely as pregnant *res extensa*, material incubator of fetal subjectivity. (Bordo 94)

Similarly, in her analysis of the sterilization and use of unsafe contraception in Native American women, Andrea Smith notes that: “[u]nder colonialism, Native women and women of color have not had any guarantees to bodily integrity; it seems that any form of dangerous contraception is appropriate, so long as it stops them from reproducing” (Smith 80). Smith states that in 1970, the United States began mass sterilizations of Native women, and that “[s]terilization abuse, while curbed, is certainly not dead, either in [Indian Health Services] IHS or society at large” (Smith 81 and 85). Smith notes that

certain women are the targets of such government intervention:

While sterilization abuse in the U.S. has ebbed since the 1970s, state control over reproductive freedom continues through the promotion of unsafe, long-acting hormonal contraceptives like Depo-Provera and Norplant for women of color, women on federal assistance, and women with disabilities. As the population scare and the demonization of poverty moved to the mainstream of the dominant culture in the U.S., Norplant and Depo-Provera became frontline weapons in the war against the poor and populations of color. (Smith 88)

Women of colour, poor women, and women with disabilities are targeted for such treatment because they are viewed as lesser than white, middle-class, able-bodied, and heterosexual women; and as such, their offspring and potential offspring are viewed as less desirable and less valuable, due to racist, ableist and capitalist notions by the neoliberal state. This discourse is reproduced through neoliberal and colonial narratives of who will and will not be productive members of society. This discrimination is heightened in cases where the pregnant woman also has substance abuse issues. In her analysis of an organization that targets pregnant substance users, Smith notes that the discourse and public messaging connotes that “poor women who are substance abusers are the cause of social ills, and that the conditions that give rise to poor women becoming substance abusers do not need to be addressed” (Smith 86). Addressing the social determinants of health that lead to substance abuse issues and poorer health outcomes are beyond the scope of this paper and my current research, however, in her analysis Smith raises an important note about the desirability of reproducing certain segments of the body politic. She examines the role of Planned Parenthood both in the United States and in the Global South, and while the organization provides valuable family planning services, “it does so through a population framework that inevitably shifts a focus from family planning as right in and of itself to family planning as an instrument of population

control” (Smith 102). Smith links this paradigm of population control to Planned Parenthood’s roots in the eugenics movement (Smith 102), and again to the desirability and undesirability of reproducing members of the body politic.

The notion that communities of color, including Native communities, pollute the body politic continues to inform the contemporary population control movement. People of color are scapegoated for environmental destruction, poverty, and war. Women of color are particularly threatening, as they have the ability to reproduce the next generations of communities of color. Consequently, it is not surprising that control over the reproductive abilities of women of color has come to be seen as a “national security” issue for the U.S. (Smith 79)

I agree with Smith’s assertion that communities of colour are seen as polluting the body politic, and would add that disabled, queer, and aging populations have also been targeted by this messaging and surveillance. Smith goes on to say that “[t]hese attacks metaphorically transform Native people into pollution or dirt from which the body politic, to ensure its growth, must constantly purify itself” (Smith 106). It is therefore important to note which types of individuals and families are reproduced. Within this paradigm, the supremacy of the white heterosexual biological family is believed over all other types of families; including queer families, adoptive families, ‘step’ families, and chosen families. Families who choose to adopt are stigmatized, and are further stigmatized if they choose to cross racial boundaries in their adoptions (see Weegar 2000, and Jennings 2006). As we see in Jennings’ study, racialized thinking and racist stereotypes impacted whether a woman would adopt across racial boundaries, and, if they did, they often had specific racial and ethnic preferences. This links to Foucault’s notion of biopower, as only certain babies and children, predominantly healthy white infants, are seen as desirable adoptees, and following them, groups of children are ranked by race to determine their desirability.

While the previously hegemonic ideology of womanhood being equated to motherhood has changed over time with feminist interventions, some theorists, such as Bordo, argue that the discourse may have changed slightly, but the results are the same:

Indeed, I believe the ideology of woman-as-fetal-incubator is stronger than ever and is making ever greater encroachments into pregnant women's lives. The difference is that today it is most likely to emerge in the context of issues concerning the "life-styles" of pregnant women. (Bordo 81)

This, she argues, removes the subjectivity of the pregnant woman as a woman, and replaces it with the subjectivity of a fetal incubator, a warm, safe place for a fetus to grow, and nothing more (Bordo 81). Likewise, in her examination of fetal photography and the disappearance of women in the discussion of pregnancy, Carol Stabile notes that imaging and technology have "made possible the ideological transformation of the female body from a benevolent, maternal environment into an inhospitable wasteland, at war with the 'innocent person' within it" (Stabile 172).

In a revealing example of her hypothesis, and one that links to Smith's discussion of pregnant substance users, Bordo discusses an episode of the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, which featured two waiters who refused to serve alcohol to a pregnant patron at the restaurant where they were working and were subsequently fired from their workplace. Bordo notes that, "[a]udience members were insistent [...] that pregnant women who engage in *any* activities that have even the *slightest* risk are behaving "selfishly" and that others are only acting responsibly in pointing this out to them" [emphasis hers] (Bordo 82). Pregnant women who do not ascribe to the totalizing discourse of appropriate and 'healthy' pregnancies are free to be judged by anyone in society as irresponsible and selfish. I would argue that this is largely due to a societal urge to 'protect' pregnant women and their fetuses, which is underpinned by notions of health, morality, and the

fear of potentially neglectful or harmful mothers. Bordo states:

Once again the specter of the evil mother looms large. The biting injustice is that pregnant women are in general probably the Best Samaritans of our culture. The overwhelming majority will suffer considerable personal inconvenience, pain, risk, and curtailment of their freedom to do what their doctors advise is in the best interests of their fetuses. As one obstetrical surgeon put it, most of the women he sees “would cut off their heads to save their babies”. (Bordo 83)

In this excerpt from Bordo we see how the majority of pregnant women’s lived experiences as being dutiful and cautious towards their fetuses is negated by the societal fear of potentially neglectful pregnant women. It is a discriminatory paradigm that seeks to save women and their fetuses from themselves.

Janet Maher, in her article “Visibly Pregnant: Toward a Placental Body,” argues that through the use of visual technologies that distinguish fetal and maternal entities in the pregnant body such as the ultrasound and other imaging technologies, the visibility of women in pregnancy has been erased (Maher 96). Similarly, Carol Stabile argues that visual technologies such as ultrasounds and fetal photography; such as the famous fetal images used by anti-choice groups, have served a “crucial role in this erasure of women’s bodies” (Stabile 172). Stabile argues that these “images have worked to impose the image of the free-floating fetus and erase the reality of the pregnant bodies that produce them” (Stabile 181-182).

As a potential alternative to this, Maher argues for a ‘placental’ view of the pregnant body, that is, that the fetus relies on the placenta and the placenta is the link between pregnant woman and fetus, creating one subject/body position. Maher states:

The purpose for which I turn to the placenta is twofold. The placenta offers a direct contestation of the widely circulated images of the free-floating foetus. The importance of connection that erases neither the pregnant woman nor the foetus is maintained physiologically and theoretically through the connective tissues of the placental organ. The second potential mediated through the placenta is a

refiguration of the relationship between subject and body more generally. The possibility of an organ that does not belong to one body, but rather is turned to multiple sites, reforms embodied subjectivity in terms that are much more fluid. Rather than seeking to reinstate the pregnant subject at the centre of the frame, the placenta allows for a new notion of subjectivity that does not depend on closed edges in order to construct itself. The identity of the pregnant subject, in this reading, is not threatened through the multiplication implicit in pregnancy, but is rather expanded and altered by the shifting corporeal terrain. (Maher 97)

While her hypothesis may become problematic when discussing issues of reproductive choice, it is nonetheless a very intriguing subject position. Maher argues that her position accounts for choice, as it provides an alternative to the differential and often at odds subject position of pregnant woman versus fetus (Maher 100). Maher states that this dichotomy was produced largely in relation to the medicalization of pregnancy, and that “autonomy and bodily integrity were at risk for women as pregnancy moved further into the domain of the medical” (Maher 97). To that end, she states:

[P]rocess is a key factor that must be included in a new construction of the visual field. It is also the key term in reconstituting subjectivity in readings of pregnancy and in other formulations of the embodied subject. If one can understand the relation between the maternal and foetal entities as fluid and processual, as placental, pregnancy ceases to represent a contest for full articulation between two subjects potentially in competition. (Maher100)

So, rather than pregnancy remaining only “a specific feminine embodied state,” Maher’s ideation of the placental subjectivity “models new corporeal possibilities, where the engagement with another corporeal entity represents productivity and not threat” (Maher 101). She notes:

A focus on the placenta opens up these conventional representations of pregnancy, constructed by the viewing paradigms. Rather than allowing for the insistent figure of two, the placenta makes explicit the links and forms the precondition for the pregnant state. Without the placenta, the body of the woman cannot sustain the foetus, and without the foetus, the woman ceases to be pregnant. The placenta, in its location in the gestating body, can be read as matter and metaphor for a different understanding of gestation and the pregnant body. Instead of the divisive view of pregnancy as two-in-one, the placenta calls for an

understanding of the singularity and fluidity of this bodily incarnation. (Maher 105)

This is an interesting notion, and one that offers a challenge or another option rather than the predominant view of the pregnant woman/fetus dyad.

Our bodies are not merely our physical forms, nor the physical representation of our selves, but also a representation filled with cultural meaning based on our cultural context. To quote Susan Bordo, “[t]he body- what we eat, how we dress, the daily rituals through which we attend to the body- is a medium of culture” (Bordo 165). Bordo states that the body is “a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body” (Bordo, 165). Similarly, as Michel Foucault states in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, “[t]he body [...] is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions” (Foucault 11). In keeping with Foucault’s discussion of the body, Bordo states that the body “is not only a *text* of culture,” [emphasis hers] it is also “a *practical*, direct locus of social control [emphasis hers] (Bordo 165).

Rather than a time of relaxation and loosening of social norms, pregnancy is associated with stricter performative requirements for women. Pregnant women must become vigilant in monitoring their own behaviours or risk judgment, public admonitions, and even legal consequences, such as in the case of pregnant women who use drugs and alcohol (Bordo 83). Bordo reminds us that while an extraordinary level of care is required of the pregnant woman toward her fetus, “neither the father nor the state nor private industry is held responsible for any of the harms they may be inflicting on developing fetuses, nor are they required to contribute to their care” (Bordo 83). Hence,

while many societal and environmental dangers may harm the fetus while in utero, it is only the pregnant woman who bears the burden of care and prevention of harm. While in the current era, Western society has placed seemingly equal value on heterosexual co-parenting and fatherhood, Bordo is right to point out that during pregnancy, “[o]nly the pregnant woman, apparently, has the ‘duty of care’ (Bordo 84). This is framed in what Bordo calls “mechanistic terms”, because pregnant women are essentially viewed as fleshy incubators (Bordo 84). I agree with Bordo’s assertion that the pregnant woman has been forced into the realm of the non-subject in legal and medical discourse, and that her subjectivity as a person has been replaced by the perceived appropriate subjectivity of the pregnant woman or a version of what Foucault would call a ‘docile body’. As Foucault states, “[a] body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (Foucault 136).

Foucault’s docile body is a disciplined body:

Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the other hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. (Foucault 138)

He goes on to say that:

Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. It is not a triumphant power, which because of its own excess can pride itself on its omnipotence; it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy. (Foucault 170)

Bordo uses Foucault’s notion of the docile body to elaborate on pregnant women’s subjectivity, or lack thereof. She, like Foucault, argues that our bodies are

disciplined in very real ways:

Not chiefly through ideology, but through the organization and regulation of the time, space, and movements of our daily lives, our bodies are trained, shaped, and impressed with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity, femininity. (Bordo 165-6)

She goes on to say that:

Viewed historically, the discipline and normalization of the female body- perhaps the only gender oppression that exercises itself, although to different degrees and in different forms, across age, race, class, and sexual orientation- has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control. (Bordo 166)

The disciplining of female bodies and in turn the creation of docile bodies relegates women to the tropes of appropriate womanhood and motherhood. The disciplining of the ever-changing pregnant body into conforming to standards of beauty and femininity through bump watch normalizes the dominant view of motherhood and appropriate womanhood.

As noted in the introduction to this paper, at no time is the fact that women's bodies are public bodies more evident than when a woman is pregnant. Once a woman's body is read as pregnant, a new set of social rules, prescriptions, and surveillance are thrust upon her. Pregnant women are subjected to constant interventions and questions about their pregnancy. Some women may be greeted with friendly or 'good-natured' advice, greetings from strangers, and intrusions into their personal space; such as strangers stroking their bellies, asking how far along they are in their pregnancies, the sex of the baby, etc. Research suggests that at the same time, they may also be feeling cultural pressures about motherhood, femininity, slenderness, and Western beauty ideals (Dworkin and Sachs). In their examination of a fitness magazine aimed at pregnant women and new mothers, Shari Dworkin and Faye Linda Sachs in their article, "Getting

Your Body Back': Postindustrial Fit Motherhood in Shape Fit Pregnancy Magazine," argue that "[t]he female body is often framed as failing in myriad ways so as to encourage adherence to an always shifting, idealized feminine form" (Dworkin and Sachs 611). They note that "[...] at the moment when a woman's body is accomplishing a highly valued route to femininity, she is least likely to be viewed as aesthetically ideal" (Dworkin and Sachs 611). The physical changes that happen to all women to varying degrees in pregnancy, such as weight gain, change of body shape, changes in skin complexion, and hair growth, change a woman's physical appearance in sometimes drastic ways. These changes make women less physically attractive, based on cultural ideals of femininity and beauty, and yet, at the same time the pregnant woman is performing a highly valued social function and a highly valued social script of femininity. The pregnant body is not socially constructed as a desirable body, particularly not for the male gaze, and yet what it represents; motherhood, family, and nurturance, are constructed as desirable. It is as though the socially desirable ends (motherhood and family) justify the socially undesirable means (pregnancy and the undesirably shifting female body).

Dworkin and Sachs note that while "media imagery and texts define pregnant women's bodies as particularly unruly and in need of fitness discipline" (Dworkin and Sachs 611), pregnancy also offers women a chance to transgress norms of slenderness:

While many women internalize such messages, others have noted how women may reject such ideals since pregnancy offers a unique opportunity for women to find freedom from norms of physical containment. That is, similar to body building, pregnancy can potentially offer women a transgressive opportunity to take up more physical space than is normally allowed under patriarchal definitions of womanhood. (Dworkin and Sachs 611)

Additionally, pregnancy can offer some women a time to put less of an aesthetic and

more of a functional emphasis on their bodies (Dworkin and Sachs 611). So it seems that pregnancy offers, in some accounts, a liberatory subject position for women. It is as though pregnancy offers a liminal subject and body position for women.

Women's bodies in particular are mediums of culture, as it is through and on women's bodies that cultural norms are marked. As Bordo states, "[...] women in our culture are more tyrannized by the contemporary slenderness ideal than men are, as they typically have been by beauty ideals in general" (Bordo 204), and that "[w]e may be *obsessed* with our bodies, but we are hardly accepting of them" [emphasis hers] (Bordo 15). These bodily obsessions for adherence to cultural standards of beauty and notions of perfection, she argues, are the manifestations of anxieties dominant in Western cultural discourse (Bordo, 15). Popular culture, Bordo states, reinforces the idea that we can "choose" and mould our own bodies (Bordo 247). Much of this discourse of choice is projected through mainstream media such as television and magazines about weight loss and body sculpting in which the body is something to be trained and transformed. This relates to Foucault's notions of disciplining the body, as it is through bodily training and discipline that the body is transformed (Foucault 136-137).

Turning to pregnant women's presence in the media, there has been an increase in media representations of pregnant women and mothers, but does this increased presence correspond to an increased agency and subject position accorded to these women, given the space they now occupy in the public sphere? Pregnant women are no longer relegated to the private sphere, and as will see in part two of this paper, media and cultural texts have been made by and for pregnant women and mothers. This could be a result of, as Bordo noted, that "[a]t different historical moments, out of the pressure of cultural, social

and material change new images and associations emerge” (Bordo 4). I would argue that we are at such a moment for pregnant women, and will further examine this when analyzing my cultural texts in the analysis portion of this paper.

Western culture is highly influenced by visual media. In terms of pregnancy and motherhood, the media has a large impact on societal views of motherhood, and how mothers perceive themselves and how they must perform as mothers, including performing self-surveillance. According to Janet Maher, “the deployment of visual images of pregnancy not only alters the woman's experience of pregnancy and her decision-making capacity, but also alters the definition of maternity more generally” (Maher 97). Additionally, Dworkin and Sachs note, “[...] in a postindustrial economy, media serves primarily as vehicles to produce audience viewing time for advertisers,” and that often the preferred meanings attached to these texts uphold the Western bodily ideal (Dworkin and Sachs 613). The slenderness ideal for women is one to which even pregnant women and new mothers are bound. In Dworkin and Sachs’ work, fitness as part of a self-surveillance and disciplining process, becomes “something to do as a gift for the self while the constant maintenance (and privilege) required to sustain it are subsumed under the realm of feminist liberation” (Dworkin and Sachs 618). Rather than being encouraged to take time to enjoy and get accustomed to their new infant and their new role as mothers, women are instead encouraged to enter a regime of fitness that will enable them to “bounce back” to their former selves (Dworkin and Sachs 617). Several of the articles featured in *Shape Fit Pregnancy* even went so far as to encourage women to use their babies as weights to perform exercises (Dworkin and Sachs 619). While physical fitness may be of great benefit to a new mother’s physical and mental health, the

way it is encouraged in magazines and other media reinforces the disciplining of the female form into the ideal of slenderness. As Dworkin and Sachs note, the fitness discourse, when framed in relation to feminist notions of “choice” and “control” is dangerous, as it encourages a return to disciplinary practices rather than freedom from them. As such, they caution a simplistic reading of such media:

A more feminist version of media frames need not only deploy feminist discourse when fitness means better mothering or the nuclear family form. Multiple family forms are feminist and need not be ignored along with other feminist issues faced by the readership such as wage gaps, occupational sex segregation, buying off the second shift, the dearth of work-family policies, physical strength and empowerment in its own right, and the lack of child care in workplaces. Drawing on feminist discourse to produce fit mothers in the private sphere is ironically quite removed from the way in which liberal feminism fought for women's access to the public sphere in the first place. (Dworkin and Sachs 622)

This is important to note, as often in the media discourses of choice get conflated with real choice.

How does the slenderness ideal impact women with regards to societal and self-surveillance? In the context of the bump watch, all women, but especially those which society has deemed of appropriate childbearing age, are under the scrutiny of society in terms of a potential pregnancy. If they have a larger frame or more weight centralized in their abdomen, this increases the surveillance of whether or not they are or will become pregnant. This surveillance may increase depending on a woman's circumstances, sexuality, race, and other factors. The body, as Bordo argues, is indeed a battleground for women: “[t]he metaphor of the body as battleground, rather than postmodern playground, captures, as well, the *practical* difficulties involved in the political struggle to empower ‘difference’” [emphasis hers] (Bordo 263). In terms of female body types, difference is not often tolerated nor accepted, but rather a fit and slender body is preferred over other

types. As noted by Dworkin and Sachs, “[f]lesh or fat on the body has been framed as a signifier of excessiveness, being out of control, a devaluation of the feminine, and failed individual morality needing earthly discipline” (Dworkin and Sachs 611). This intolerance of different body types becomes internalized by women, and operationalized through fitness and body training regimes. As Dworkin and Sachs note, “fitness is carried out by women not simply for health reasons but also to normalize appearances most aligned with current signifiers of emphasized femininity” (Dworkin and Sachs 611). While this is true of all women, these practices become intensified for women who are either under the scrutiny of bump watch, pregnant, or new mothers, “where fitness is much more than a simple embracing of health practices that maximize child and maternal health” (Dworkin and Sachs 611), but rather operates under the “larger cultural imperatives that define women's bodies as deserving of size control might be intensified during pregnancy” (Dworkin and Sachs 612).

Turning to Foucault, his work on surveillance and Panopticism, as well as his related theories of biopower/biopolitics and docile bodies are important theoretical tools to discuss pregnant and maternal subjectivities. Foucault has been widely quoted for his use of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, a circular prison structure where prisoners are visible from all angles to a guard in a central tower, and would perform self-surveillance as a result of this visibility:

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (Foucault 201)

While Western culture is a Panoptic culture generally, this is especially true for pregnant women, as their every decision can be scrutinized by society at large. This invariably is linked to notions of reproduction and productivity, as it is a certain class of infants that are desirable; i.e. white, able-bodied, and coming from a two-parent, heterosexual and biologically linked family. This is related to Foucault's interlinked notions of biopolitics and biopower.

As translated by Rabinow and Rose, Foucault's theory of biopolitics is:

[T]he endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race... we are aware of the expanding place these problems have occupied since the nineteenth century, and of the political and economic issues they have constituted up to the present day. (Foucault 202)

Foucault's work on biopower relates to the productive/reproductive pregnant subject. The disciplining and surveillance of pregnant women through discursive means such as bump watch is tied to Foucault's notion of biopower, as the maternal subject is linked into narratives of productivity and efficiency. The benefits of white privilege are accorded to white mothers and their children, as they are seen as the desirable examples of the maternal child dyad. According to Jennings, the unspoken bias in our society is that "white healthy infants are the most highly valued children in our society," and that social worth is equated with whiteness (Jennings 571-572).

The mechanisms and logic of biopower and surveillance extend to contemporary motherhood in a myriad of ways. One such example is fitness magazines, such as the one explored by Dworkin and Sachs, that counsel pregnant women to train for the physical demands of labour through modified fitness regimes (Dworkin and Sachs 614), and advocate that women "get in shape for delivery, making it easier, quicker, and less

painful and requiring less time to ‘bounce back’” post-baby (Dworkin and Sachs 615).

Thus, the interlocking notions of biopower, self-surveillance and Panopticism influence women from pre-pregnancy preparations through delivery, and post-baby in order to return to their former fit selves.

We must also investigate who benefits from these systems of surveillance and bodily control for all women, but specifically in the context of pregnant women and new mothers:

It is clear that the tension between the physical experiences of pregnancy and the dictates of gendered bodily norms allows for corporations to capitalize on intensified feelings of anxiety about the body to sell the benefits of fitness to pregnant women. (Dworkin and Sachs 612)

The maximization of biopower and the creation of docile bodies enable a consumer culture based on media and cultural scripts, and vice versa. As explored by Magnet and

Gates:

In many respects, surveillance technologies *are* media technologies, and in that sense all forms of surveillance beyond direct supervision involve the use of media, from writing and paper to digital video and audio recording devices. [emphasis theirs] (Magnet and Gates 2)

Magnet and Gates further note that surveillance practices “are part of the cultural rituals of modern societies” (Magnet and Gates 9). Although surveillance systems and technologies are expressed in a myriad of ways and impact us all to differing extents in Western society based on our gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and age, the surveillance of pregnant women happens in very particular ways through medical, legal, media, and social discourses aimed at both preventing harm to the fetus and to monitoring and disciplining women’s bodies.

The surveillance of pregnant women through bump watch aims to negate the power inherent to the pregnant woman and the pregnant body. Theorists such as Rosi Braidotti state that part of the power of the pregnant woman's body lies in the fact that it can change shape so dramatically:

The woman's body can change shape in pregnancy and childbearing; it is therefore capable of defeating the notion of fixed *bodily form*, of visible, recognizable, clear and distinct shapes as that which marks the contour of the body. She is morphologically dubious. [emphasis hers] (Braidotti 64)

She goes on to say that:

The fact that the female body can change shape so drastically is troublesome in the eyes of the logocentric economy within which to see is the primary act of knowledge and *the gaze* the basis of all epistemic awareness. [emphasis hers] (Braidotti 64)

Perhaps the fact that women's bodies are capable of such change has caused the discourse of women's deviancy vis-à-vis men, and has led to increased surveillance. Braidotti argues that through their difference and deviance to the norm of the relatively stable male form, pregnant women are labeled as being monstrous due to the drastic changes the female body can achieve (Braidotti 65). She states, "[...] we can argue that the female body shares with the monster the privilege of bringing out a unique blend of *fascination and horror*" [emphasis hers] (Braidotti 65). While this may be true, I would argue that perhaps instead of this reading of pregnancy as deviance alone, we might tease out power from this deviance. That is perhaps why the pregnant female form in being larger and taking up more physical space than the non-pregnant female form is, in the modern Western cultural context, the site of such anxiety and pressure to return to the former, smaller and perhaps less powerful self. As Dworkin and Sachs examined, the discourse featured in *Shape Fit Pregnancy* was mostly about shaping one's body to its pre-baby

state: “[r]egaining control of the unruly pregnant form is normalized in pursuit of an openly stated central goal: to return to one's former size” (Dworkin and Sachs 616). Once again, women of colour were largely excluded from these pursuits, as noted by Dworkin and Sachs:

It is noteworthy that 81 percent of the featured models in the workouts are white, underscoring not only the racialized, classed nature of the target demographic but also the way in which ideals of maternal beauty are racialized. (Dworkin and Sachs 616)

This racialization is once again informed by societal and cultural beliefs of healthy and desirable pregnancies and babies as being white. Although media has created space for new representations of motherhood, these representations merely reinforce cultural tropes of appropriate motherhood, womanhood, and slenderness.

## **Part two – Media analysis**

### ***Bump watch and mass media culture – The example of Bethenny Frankel***

The first example of bump watch, surveillance, and thinness I wish to examine is reality television celebrity Bethenny Frankel. Bethenny Frankel is not only a recent example of celebrity bump watch, as her 2010 pregnancy was highly monitored by the media and documented on reality television, but she is also an example of the pressures of slenderness thrust upon women in North America. Frankel is a new media celebrity. She is a bestselling author, entrepreneur, chef, and reality television personality. Bethenny made her first appearance on television in 2005 on the NBC reality show *The Apprentice: Martha Stewart*, where she came in second place (“Bethenny’s Bio”). She was then cast on Bravo’s series *The Real Housewives of New York City*, a reality show in which she starred along side other wealthy white women living in New York City for

three seasons, from 2008 to 2010. The show followed the women's daily lives, and featured the glamour and wealth of the city as a backdrop to their friendships and squabbles. *The Real Housewives of New York City* became quite popular, as did Frankel herself. Two other Bravo reality shows followed, *Bethenny Getting Married?* and *Bethenny Ever After*, in addition to competing on ABC's *Skating with the Stars* in 2010 ("Bethenny's Bio").

In 2010, Bethenny debuted a spin-off to *The Real Housewives of New York City* entitled *Bethenny Getting Married?*. The premiere of *Bethenny Getting Married?* had the highest ratings of any Bravo series debut with more than two million viewers ("Bethenny's Bio"). The show followed Frankel in her post-*Real Housewives* life, including her engagement, pregnancy, getting married, and having her first child. These important milestones were captured on film for the world to see, including very private and intimate moments; such as Frankel taking a pregnancy test and learning she was pregnant during the filming of *The Real Housewives of New York City* ("New Girl, Old Money"), to giving birth ("Baby Won't Wait") and breastfeeding ("Getting More than Married") on *Bethenny Getting Married?*. Frankel is very much a part of the new breed of media celebrities, the overexposed reality star. However, through her use of media and celebrity, she has become a noteworthy entrepreneur, selling a lifestyle brand that includes everything from cookbooks and lifestyle books, to personal training programs and workout videos, to undergarments and pre-mixed alcoholic cocktails, all under her SkinnyGirl brand.

Frankel had a highly visible and public pregnancy, not only through the documenting of it on her reality shows *The Real Housewives of New York City* and

*Bethenny Getting Married?*, but also in the tabloid press and internet blogs. To a large extent, Frankel not only fed into this media surveillance, but she also seemed to seek out bump watch outright through choosing to expose such private areas of her life on camera. To begin, her pregnancy test was filmed for *The Real Housewives*, (“New Girl, Old Money”), and later her pregnancy was revealed without her consent in the press by internet blogger Perez Hilton before family members were notified of the pregnancy and much before Frankel’s body could have been read as pregnant (“Stay on Message”). While the true ‘reality’ of so-called reality television shows is debatable, and it is possible that either or both of these scenes were staged for the cameras or reenactments of actual events, Frankel purposely revealed and experienced these moments in the public eye. Throughout her pregnancy, she and her pregnant belly, or bump, were thoroughly monitored, and Frankel exemplified a new type of pregnant celebrity, one that flaunts her pregnant belly while being photographed wearing tight fitting clothing and bikinis. This is the new acceptable pregnancy, one that is highly visible, closely monitored, thin, and ‘healthy’. This differs from the traditional social role and representation of the pregnant body, as according to Carol Stabile:

Traditionally, the pregnant female body has been the object of medical scrutiny and surveillance, as well as a mystical (if unrepresentable) reverence and awe in Western culture. The pregnant body- even clothed- is a source of abjection and disgust in popular culture: the woman is represented as awkward, uncomfortable, and grotesquely excessive. In a culture that places such a premium on thinness, the pregnant body is anathema. Not only is it perhaps the most visible and physical mark of sexual difference, it is also the sign for deeply embedded fears and anxieties about femininity and the female reproductive system. With the advent of visual technologies, the contents of the uterus have become demystified and entirely representable, but the pregnant body itself remains concealed. (Stabile 183)

While I would agree with Stabile that traditionally the pregnant body was unrepresentable, I would argue that currently the pregnant body is no longer concealed, but is now a fully representable and, to some extent, a fully exploitable public body. This has been fueled by the rise of bump watch culture in media. Although Stabile does not articulate the bump watch phenomenon specifically in her work, she does discuss the rise of the visibility of pregnant women in the nineties. I would argue that this new bump watch phenomenon, although not articulated in the press for roughly another decade, began with Demi Moore's famous 1991 cover of *Vanity Fair* magazine, where she posed nude while pregnant (Stabile 183). Stabile states that the cover caused the most controversy in *Vanity Fair*'s history, even though the cover "displayed no more skin than magazines like *Allure*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Vogue* do on a regular basis," (Stabile 183) but that "[w]hat repelled and shocked viewers obviously was the vast expanse of white, pregnant belly" (Stabile 183). While I would agree with Stabile that in 1991, this was undoubtedly a new and possibly shocking image, this image served as a catalyst for the bump watch phenomenon. Rather than a one-off publicity stunt for both *Vanity Fair* and Demi Moore, this photograph has been replicated and referenced on several magazine covers. The most reminiscent of Moore's shot is Britney Spears' August 2006 cover of *Harper's Bazaar* in which Spears, à la Moore, is wearing only a necklace and cupping her breasts with her hands (Lubomirski 2006). The difference between the Spears and Moore covers, although a decade and a half separate them, are limited. Spears is clearly referencing Moore, but where Moore's facial expression was regal and nearly cold, Spears is happy and reflects a lighter tone. This is reflective of the new ideology of bump watch, where it is not only expected that women (especially pregnant female celebrities)

will be under public scrutiny and surveillance, but also that there is a measure of pride or pleasure associated with it, most likely associated with the vanity of formerly private moments becoming public domain. Bethenny Frankel did not have a nude pregnant magazine cover, but did pose for revealing pregnancy pictures meant for her husband, but filmed as part of season one of her reality show *Bethenny Getting Married? ("The Honeymoon Is Over")*.

Through the surveillance of bump watch, pregnant women are now expected to conform to ideals of beauty and thinness throughout their pregnancy, only gaining a limited, 'healthy' amount of weight, and if they are genetically inclined, that weight will be centralized in their breasts and stomach. When asked about her pregnancy, Frankel stated in *US Weekly* that "[i]t's been great. I haven't been particularly nauseous, and I get a decent night's sleep, which is refreshing [...] [m]y boobs are big, but other than that, nothing's crazy" ("Exclusive Photos [...]"). Frankel explicitly mentions her breasts in this excerpt, perhaps in order to maintain a link to her pre-pregnancy life, one where she enjoyed the male gaze and was prized for being thin and fit. Pre-pregnancy, it can be argued that Frankel put much stock into her appearance and body, as she posed nude in a highly publicized campaign for PETA in 2009 (which was later televised on Season 3 in an episode entitled "New Alliances," of *The Real Housewives of New York City*), and therefore during and post-pregnancy, she wished to maintain a link to her celebrity sex appeal.

Indeed, both a pregnant and post-pregnancy Bethenny Frankel exemplifies the women featured in Dworkin and Sachs examination of *Shape Fit Pregnancy*. Three weeks following the birth of her first child, Frankel was highly publicized for being in US

Weekly magazine in a size four bathing suit (see Figure 1 in Appendix) (“Exclusive: Bethenny Frankel in Size-4 Swimsuit 3 Weeks After Baby!”). In the same issue, Frankel stated that three weeks after giving birth she had lost 29 of the 35 pounds she gained while pregnant, and explained her diet and fitness regimen post-baby. She then stated “I’m still wearing maternity clothes, because they’re comfortable”, and further said “I’m excited to get into my Louboutins again” (“Exclusive: Bethenny Frankel in Size-4 Swimsuit 3 Weeks After Baby!”) referring to the high heels made by French Designer Christian Louboutin. Once again, Frankel references a return to her pre-pregnant self, one that performs a highly gendered and sexualized script by wearing tight clothing and high heels for the male gaze. Frankel exemplifies the pressures that North American women feel to remain thin and attractive while pregnant. Furthermore, she is part of a new generation of celebrity mothers who compete for who can return to their former size the quickest post-pregnancy. These highly publicized post-delivery weight losses add further pressures to North American women’s already strained views of their bodies in relation to the idealized, slender female form.

Adding to the debate about thinness in the media, nearly a year post-baby tabloid magazine US Weekly had Bethenny Frankel on their February 14, 2011 cover with the headline “I Was Obsessed With Being Thin” (See figure 2 in Appendix). Inside the magazine, Frankel discusses her experiences with eating disorders and body image, and notes that she started dieting at age eight (“Exclusive: Bethenny Frankel: I Was ‘Obsessed With Dieting’”). Yet the article itself is problematic, as it begins with describing Frankel’s current weight, height and age, and her past struggles with weight. While the magazine’s intentions may be to shock its readers with this confession-style

headline, it is not a stretch of the imagination to think that a woman who has named her lifestyle brand SkinnyGirl may have body image issues. In an interview with US Weekly, Frankel notes states that she “spent [her] entire life being obsessed with dieting [...] bingeing and then fasting or starving” (“Exclusive: Bethenny Frankel: I Was ‘Obsessed With Dieting’”). Throughout her short career in the media, Frankel has made her name through an association with thinness, and in Western society thinness is largely equated to health.

It is no coincidence that Bethenny Frankel chose to name her brand SkinnyGirl, as it reflects both the image she portrays in the media and her physical stature. She is building a lifestyle brand based on notions of health and healthy living through diet and exercise. Frankel has a background in nutrition, as she attended the Natural Gourmet Institute for Health and Culinary Arts, and became a chef. Her personal website claims that she is “on a mission to democratize healthy living, making information available to everyone she can reach” (“Bethenny’s Bio”), and offers a variety of tips, recipes, and products for sale. The website also features a tab on health and fitness, where Bethenny shares her opinions in short articles. In one such article, “My Thoughts on Breastfeeding,” Frankel waded into the breastfeeding debate and states that breastfeeding her child was the best option for her, and that it was a “beautiful, intimate and private moment” between her and her child, and that she did not “feel comfortable doing it in front of other people” (“My Thoughts on Breastfeeding”). This is highly debatable, as she breastfed on camera. However, Frankel is, to a certain extent, an accessible role model for some women in terms of pregnancy, motherhood and breastfeeding, offering tips both in the press and on her television show.

It is important to note that Bethenny Frankel would likely not have attained the level of fame and celebrity accorded to her had she not been an attractive, white, and relatively wealthy woman to begin with. Having every aspect of her life in the public eye and under public scrutiny was likely easier for her than it would have been had she also been on a reality television show about, say, poor pregnant teens, such as MTV's *Teen Mom* (2009). Frankel's pregnancy out of wedlock was deemed acceptable because of her race, age, sexuality, ability, and class position. Being a late thirties, white, able-bodied woman in a monogamous heterosexual relationship and being deemed able to afford the child she was carrying, there was little public evidence of scrutiny of her pregnancy and motherhood. Additionally, her appearances on reality television have included very limited examples of the ethnic and class diversity in a city as multicultural and diverse as New York. *The Real Housewives of New York City* has not featured a single person of colour as a main cast member in the three seasons it has aired. Indeed, one of the few people of colour featured on her *Bethenny Getting Married?* reality series was Frankel's baby nurse. In one episode in particular, the new family takes a vacation to Montauk and brings their baby nurse, along with Frankel's two personal assistants ("Getting More than Married"). While Frankel's relationship with the nurse is a friendly one, it is also a highly racialized and classed relationship, one of employer and employee.

In summary, Bethenny Frankel represents a new type of celebrity, the overexposed reality star who embraces her surveillance and even her bump watch by fueling media speculation and by allowing the media to expose what were once thought of as private and personal aspects of celebrities' lives. Through her reality television programs, Frankel exposes important personal life events such as her pregnancy,

delivery, and marriage to cameras and subsequently to audiences at home. Additionally, through her website and SkinnyGirl brand of products she has created a way to market her lifestyle to other women, while offering her opinions and advice on diverse topics. While celebrity status and fame are arguably both the driver for and the result of this exposure, she also exemplifies a new type of pregnant woman who feeds into her bump watch by performing highly gendered and sexualized social scripts and is not only monitored via the media but also self-monitors and performs self-surveillance. Similar to Frankel's self-surveillance of her pregnancy, I would now like to discuss a monitoring tool that can be utilized by everyday women (provided they have access to an iPhone and the ability to pay for such services).

### ***Surveillance and monitoring of maternal bodies through technology – the Bump Watch iPhone application***

Apple's iPhone has in some respects revolutionized telecommunications in the twenty-first century, much as the iPod revolutionized music, through technological innovation, aesthetics and style, and notions of efficiency. The applications or 'apps' available to iPhone consumers number in the hundreds of thousands. These apps are accessible via the iTunes App Store, and include everything from games, to fitness tips, to maps and global positioning systems, to fashion and parenting advice. One such app is the appropriately titled Bump Watch app, created by a company called The Healthy Belly.com. For \$1.99 (U.S. dollars), you can "track your pregnancy with The Healthy Belly's Bump Watch" app ("The Healthy Belly Bump Watch Tracker") (see Figure 3 in Appendix). This Bump Watch app enables pregnant women to track their pregnancy weekly, and track their child or children's development from birth until age three. The

app is largely marketed to women, which is not necessarily problematic given that according to Stabile, “[u]nlike mothering, pregnancy can only be undertaken by women” (Stabile 185), however, although not marketed as such the app could potentially also be used by pregnant women’s partners. The Healthy Belly Bump Watch Tracker features what at first glance seem to be efficient and time-saving features, including a calendar and schedule for doctors appointments; a photo log; a space to keep track of their pregnancy and development as it progresses; weekly positive affirmations; weekly nutrition tips; weekly fitness tips; a weekly pregnancy check-list; a kick-counter to track the fetuses’ kicks; access to pregnancy articles and frequently-asked-questions; discounts and coupons; Healthy Belly Internet videos or ‘webisodes’; and a feature that enables women to time and monitor their contractions. While these features may be helpful for some women at different intervals during their pregnancies, I am not sure how many women are thinking about using their cellular phone to monitor contractions while in labour as they are likely preoccupied with other matters. Unless the idea is to create a distraction from the pain and discomfort of delivery, in which case this may be an appropriate tool for some pregnant women.

The Healthy Belly Bump Watch app also functions as a social-networking site, as users are encouraged to upload a profile photo, include photos of their children, and post frequent updates of their pregnancy’s progression. The Healthy Belly Bump Watch app is meant to be a one-stop-shop for pregnant women, and features tools as diverse as baby and parent astrology, to a schedule feature for male partners. While these tools may be helpful for some women, certain features such as the scheduling tool for male partners reinforce heterosexist norms about two-parent, heterosexual families. Other online

features of the app are less controversial, and include planning tools such as a due date calculator, a way to monitor the fetus' kicks and movement during pregnancy, an ovulation calendar for women who are wanting or planning to conceive, and, somewhat paradoxically, a contraception calculator for women wanting to avoid a pregnancy.

While the surveillance aspects of this tool will be problematized further, I can also understand how this tool may be empowering to some women in terms of learning more about their bodies during pregnancy, as well as keeping virtual record of their changing bodies. This personal record may help pregnant women feel in control and empowered during their pregnancies, as according to Stabile pregnancy has not always had empowering connotations for women:

Pregnancy has been traditionally predicated on an essentialism that reduces women to passive vessels the receptacles of sperm. (Stabile 184)

Furthermore, when conflated with mothering, pregnancy takes on the added significance of entirely defining women's ontological state of being, her desires, her goals. (Stabile 185)

As such, this tool could be a valuable one for women seeking to take more control over their own bodies and to have a tangible record post-pregnancy. It also offers what are likely valuable resources to new mothers, in the form of a virtual community and support system for women who may or may not have a support system of other mothers around them to help them navigate through these life changes. What is perhaps unfortunate, then, is that this tool is limited to those who have the means to afford it, and that some women who could benefit from this virtual support system have no way of accessing it.

The Bump Watch app is part of The Health Belly.com's website, which like the app, features advice and planning tools for parents, pregnant women, women who think they may be pregnant, and women wanting to conceive. The website features information

on topics such as healthy beginnings, featuring articles that discuss issues of becoming pregnant, being ready for pregnancy, readying for motherhood and fatherhood, prenatal care, and birth plans and methods; healthy babies, featuring articles on topics such as infant care, toddler care, breastfeeding, and vaccinations; healthy tots, featuring advice for raising children; and additional tabs for organic living, fitness and health, diet and nutrition, healthy belly checklists, and baby names, among others (“The Healthy Belly”). There is also an interesting feature on the website, the Cost of Raising Your Child Baby Cost Calculator, which calculates the approximate costs of raising a child from birth to age eighteen in the United States. The cost listed on the website as the average or likely cost to raise a child is \$269,794.00 (U.S. dollars), based on figures from 2007, and includes additional expenses to housing, groceries, food, transportation, clothing, education, and other necessities (“Cost of Raising Your Child”). The cost for the first year of life is listed at \$15,308.00 (U.S. dollars); and is based on the increased costs to families, most notably in health care (“Cost of Raising Your Child”). While Canadian figures may be similar, Canadian families have the benefit of universal health care, which would greatly reduce the costs of the first year of life. What is notable as part of this feature is that the act of raising a child is addressed in explicitly capitalist terms. The baby cost calculator produces average figures in order to give parents-to-be an average number of anticipated costs so that they can take these costs into account when planning their families. The cost calculator is an interesting tool, and one that bears further examination as it would be interesting to see if couples delay having children or do not have children as a result of the associated costs to having them.

Additional tools provided by the Healthy Belly website and Bump Watch pregnancy tracker app offer pregnant women new ways which to visualize their pregnancies. This can be linked to Haraway's discussion of visual tools employed in order to visualize the fetus. Haraway states that the fetus owes its "existence as [a] public object [...] to visualizing technologies" such as computers, sonography machines, television, and others (Haraway 23). She goes on to say that:

[...] in many contemporary technologically mediated pregnancies, expectant mothers emotionally bond with their fetuses through learning to see the developing child on screen during a sonogram. (Haraway 27)

I would agree with Haraway, and would further argue that web-based tools that enable women to track their pregnancies serve to further strengthen the emotional bond created through visualizing technologies. Women who use these online tools are a part of an online community of mothers and pregnant women, and will use the tools to monitor their pregnancies while perhaps also posting pictures of their developing bellies or other visuals such as sonograms. However, as noted by Haraway these imaging tools are not always unproblematic, and may reinforce class discrimination as they; along with quality medical care, are not available to all women equally (Haraway 50).

While both The Healthy Belly website and the Bump Watch Pregnancy Tracker app offer what could very well be useful and time-saving tools to pregnant women or to women desiring to be pregnant, its discursive practices must be problematized. Much of The Healthy Belly.com site is filled with capitalist and class-based ideas about parenthood, including the supremacy of the double-parent, heterosexual household, the high costs of raising a child, and even capitalist notions of efficiency through tracking and scheduling tools available on both the website and the Bump Watch app. Further, the

Healthy Belly's Bump Watch Pregnancy Tracker is an example of not only surveillance, albeit self-surveillance, but also of Foucault's notion of biopower. Through both the Bump Watch app and the larger The Healthy Belly.com website, the supremacy of health is established through doctrines of health and fitness, nutrition, regimenting and scheduling doctor's visits, and even advice on two hotly-debated issues in North America; breastfeeding and vaccinations. In this sense, it is linked to Foucault's notion of biopower in that the aim of the products available via The Healthy Belly.com website is to produce healthy, valued babies through surveillance, monitoring, and notions of efficiency all under the auspices of doing what is best for baby. In addition, by willingly practicing self-surveillance, women who use the Healthy Belly's Bump Watch app are becoming what Foucault would call docile bodies through the app's disciplining power (Foucault 156).

In terms of the surveillance aspect of the Bump Watch Pregnancy Tracker app, it remains to be seen where the data stored in the app would be sent, and if it would be shared with third parties, such as advertisers. In my research I was not able to find a privacy policy for the Bump Watch Pregnancy Tracker app, but The Healthy Belly's privacy policy on the website claims that they are the sole owner of the information collected on the website, and that users' information will not be shared with or sold to a third party ("Privacy Policy"). It is unknown if the privacy policy for the Bump Watch app is similar, or if one exists. In addition to privacy concerns about individual users, the app raises an important question about the potential for similar technology to be used in conjunction with biometric tools in the future. As noted by Murray, "[b]iometric technology' is a non-innocent actor in that [...], it contributes to human understanding

about identity, bodies, representation, measurement, and visibility” (Murray 71). While biometric technologies are typically used in surveillance measures such as high-quality video security used in airports, the interface between everyday technology and biometrics is becoming greater. What if, in the not-so-distant future, tools such as the Healthy Belly’s Bump Watch trackers are used as a biometric tool in order to create “readable” pregnant bodies (Murray 71)? This could enable biometric tracking, rather than self-surveillance of a woman’s pregnancy as it progresses, which could potentially be monitored by the state in order to produce the most desirable, healthy infants possible. While this may seem unlikely, there is a potential for this type of surveillance in the future due to the creation of surveillance tools such as the Bump Watch app, biometrics, and state-controlled electronic records, such as electronic health records.

The Healthy Belly’s Bump Watch app is part of the larger Bump Watch movement, as it imposes self-surveillance upon pregnant women by offering them seemingly innocuous tools for tracking their pregnancies. While this application does possess potentially efficient tools and helpful advice, its function as a surveillance tool is problematic. Rather than being simply a helpful tool for pregnant women and mothers, it also has prescriptive aspects to it regarding public health, and is limited to use by women who have the means to afford it.

### ***New Media, Old Message – Bump Watch, Breastfeeding, and the Imperative of Slenderness***

The third media text I chose builds upon my analysis of the iPhone Bump Watch application by analyzing a similarly styled and marketed online community and YouTube video. During my research I came across a YouTube channel devoted to pregnancy and

motherhood appropriately entitled “The BumpTV”, which is part of a larger online community hosted on The Bump.com website. The Bump.com originated in the United States but has membership in other countries. It is part of a virtual brand family with two other popular online communities, The Knot.com, used by brides-to-be to plan their weddings, and The Nest.com, an online community for new couples looking for advice on establishing their homes and lives together. All three websites have popular YouTube channels that correspond with their online communities, and these YouTube channels provide similar advice to the website in a more user-friendly format.

Since its inception in September 2008 this YouTube channel boasts one hundred and two videos, ninety-eight subscribers to the channel, 4,437 channel views and a total of 282,940 viewed videos<sup>2</sup>. According to the site, The BumpTV’s Official Channel offers “the inside scoop on pregnancy and parenting for first-time moms, providing them the premium content, resources and tools they need to manage their pregnancy, birth and first-year experiences” (“The BumpTV YouTube Channel”). Their videos feature advice on a gamut of issues for pregnant women and new mothers, with most featuring messaging about maternal and child health; such as nutrition, sleep, infant care, etc.

During my research, one video in particular from The BumpTV’s channel stood out to me. It was styled like a public service announcement about the benefits of breastfeeding. While the focus of the video is not pregnancy, but rather, the post-bump issue of breastfeeding, the discourse created by the video is inextricably linked to the politics of bump watch. The video is titled “Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution”, and was posted to The BumpTV’s channel in August 2010 to coincide with National

---

<sup>2</sup> These figures represent the total views at the time of writing this major research paper in March 2011.

Breastfeeding month in the United States. At just over two minutes long, the video features some recognizable faces of female celebrities such as actress Kelly Rutherford, actress Ali Larter, singer Lisa Loeb, actress Constance Marie and comedienne Ana Gastayer, who along with some everyday 'real' moms, extol the numerous virtues of breastfeeding. The video begins in a way meant to shock and grab attention by each woman saying a different slang name for breasts. Although the video begins with a light and comical feel, it quickly shifts into a more serious tone when Ali Landry asks the following question: "Did you know that by breastfeeding your knockers could save the U.S. 13 billion dollars in health care costs?" ("Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution"). What follows is a dialogue that shifts from light to serious in tone, ranging from the naturalness of breastfeeding, to it being a 'magical' experience, then shifting to the pain and anxiety felt by new mothers while breastfeeding, to breastfeeding being something women need to learn how to do and that the knowledge is not innate to women, to the cost savings and other benefits of breastfeeding. Several benefits to breastfeeding are listed in the video, including the health benefits to both mother and child. For example, two women featured in the video state that their babies were very healthy, and one in particular states that her baby was never sick during the time she was breastfeeding. They also state that by breastfeeding, infants are better immune to influenzas, allergies, and have a diminished threat of both childhood obesity and childhood cancers, which are of great benefits to babies. As for the benefits to new mothers, breastfeeding is said to offer protection against breast cancer, to prevent menstruation during the duration of breastfeeding, and is said to help women with post-partum weight loss. Or, as stated by Ali Landry in the video, "[i]t makes you skinny, it burns 500 calories a day"

("Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution"). It is then reiterated that breastfeeding could save the United States billions of dollars per year in health care costs, and ends with a chorus of women stating "whip 'em out" [sic], referring to not being embarrassed of breastfeeding publically, and a final woman stating "breastfeeding, it's what your knockers are for" ("Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution").

The hegemonic status given to breastfeeding in the "Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution" video can be linked to Brown and Ferree's discussion of media and pronatalism in the United Kingdom. Brown and Ferree's definition of pronatalism is one that encompasses any "political, ideological, or religious project to encourage childbearing by some or all members of a civil, ethnic, or national group" (Brown and Ferree 8), and "[i]nsofar as their cultural claims are successful, procreation becomes a patriotic, religious, or eugenic obligation, and motherhood is constructed as the central feature of female identity" (Brown and Ferree 8). While the "Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution" video is not explicitly a pronatalist text, in that its target audience are pregnant women, new mothers, or women who have already made the decision to conceive; the video does employ similar discursive practices, ones that may be used to pressure women to breastfeed. By discussing the potential health care savings to the United States, the video engages in nationalist discourse, and according to Brown and Ferree, pronatalism and nationalism are linked, because "[i]n nationalist discourses, the nation's strength and authenticity are tied to the biological and cultural reproduction of its people (Brown and Ferree 6). The video is effective in that it features women speaking candidly to other women, in this case, women who have breastfed their children and want to share this knowledge with other women. The women featured in the video, while some are more

recognizable than others, are somewhat representative of contemporary American society, in that they are from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. What is less representative of the American population is that there is no discussion of class, other than a brief mention that breastfeeding is free so the viewer may draw their own conclusions about the cost benefits to the individual, and that breastfeeding may be a better option for low income women and families. The lack of the obvious presentation of this information is problematic, in that rather than discussing the cost savings to individual women who breastfeed in terms of not needing to buy bottles, formula, etc., the cost benefit to the state by virtue of reduced health care costs is seen as being more important. Additionally, there is no visual representation or discussion of disability, sexuality, and age of the mothers in the video and this lack of discussion lends itself to the presentation of these women as embodying the prototypical middle and upper-class, heterosexual, young, able-bodied mother discussed earlier in this paper.

Brown and Ferree state that “media concern reflects wider social conflicts and interests” (Brown and Ferree 7). The YouTube video “Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution” reflects the recent return of the supremacy of breastfeeding over bottle-feeding infants. While the focus of this paper is not to dispute the health and social benefits of breastfeeding, it is important to interrogate why this message is being disseminated. Brown and Ferree note “media attention is not distributed according to the actual severity of a social problem, either in its prevalence or impact” (Brown and Ferree 7), and that:

[T]o say that a social problem is constructed through active media work is not to deny a material basis for concern but to focus on how those concerns are framed for a particular audience and the implications that this framing has for the political solutions seen as feasible or desirable (Brown and Ferree 7)

Following Brown and Ferree, while I would argue that the social need for and benefit of breastfeeding is constructed through videos such as this YouTube clip, this does not deny the noted health and social benefits but rather my aim is to problematize the use of this kind of targeted media. Similar to Brown and Ferree's analysis that pronatalist messages were aimed at women because of the "common assumption that reproductive work is a female duty" (Brown and Ferree 12), the "Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution" video about the benefits of breastfeeding is aimed at women not only because they are, in most cases, physically capable of breastfeeding, but also because it is assumed that women will do the majority of the infant care including feedings. While breastfeeding offers women a chance to bond with their infants, it also places a larger burden on women as their partners, male or female, are unable to breastfeed and would have less opportunity to help with infant care such as feedings. Breastfeeding is a physically and emotionally demanding practice, and one that places the burden of mid-night infant feedings solely on women's shoulders. This also has the potential to alienate the new mother's partners, in that they have less frequent bonding time with the infant and potentially a more stressful relationship with their partner due to sleep deprivation and other physiological symptoms of breastfeeding.

The video "Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution" builds upon the discursive practices and the surveillance aspects of bump watch and cultural notions of the good mother, and shifts to the discourse of the 'good, lactating mother'. While some of the video's messaging may be deemed empowering, by positioning breastfeeding as something that can be done publically, this message is somewhat lost with the larger more emphatic messaging of the cost and social benefits to breastfeeding, as though it

were the only option available to women. Foucault's idea of biopower is key when examining the video clip, in that practices of public health, regulation of risks, and perceived health benefits to mother and child are the crux of the video. In it, it is mentioned repeatedly how breastfeeding will not only help babies ward off colds and infections, but will also help women lose weight and prevent breast cancer, which leads to cost savings for both individuals and the state. The video emphasizes that the state in particular will benefit through healthcare savings of billions of dollars per year, which links to the notions of economy and efficiency in the neoliberal state. As most of the women in the video are white, and likely their children are too, the video also has a subtle racist undertone mixed into the public health and cost-benefit messaging. As examined earlier in Andrea Smith's discussion of the forced sterilization of women of colour, racist ideals of whose babies deserve to be healthy, much like which segments of the population are fit to reproduce, inform this discourse. This messaging normalizes breastfeeding and does so in a way that creates a new dominant discourse, one of good breastfeeding mothers. While I am certainly not opposed to breastfeeding, I am opposed to the social pressure some pregnant women and new mothers receive to breastfeed. As with all other reproductive health issues pertaining to women, I believe it is a matter of choice and that women should do what they are comfortable with instead of acquiescing to social pressures and norms. Rather than highlighting breastfeeding as a safe and beneficial choice among other choices, the video positions breastfeeding as the only choice. Even its title, "Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution", conjures up images that breastfeeding is linked with some sort of new revolution, or that breastfeeding is a revolutionary practice, when in reality women have been breastfeeding for millennia without the need for social

media promotion of its benefits.

The video highlights that within this discourse of doing what's best for baby, cost saving, reduced cancer risk, and weight loss are additional benefits of breastfeeding. The "Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution" video is part of the dominant discourses of slenderness and female bodily ideals, in that the majority of the women featured in the video are thin. Visually, it is effective when the links between breastfeeding, weight loss and fitness are promoted by women who fit in to the Western beauty norm of thinness. The ideal of slenderness is highlighted in the video not only when it is stated that breastfeeding burns calories and will help with weight loss, but also when Kelly Rutherford states somewhat casually that "yeah, [breastfeeding is] hard, but going to the gym is hard" ("Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution"). In this quote, Rutherford likens breastfeeding to exercise and therefore links breastfeeding to a practice of disciplining the self, a practice with which it is possible to achieve the Western feminine body ideal. This is related to Shari Dworkin and Faye Sachs's work on post-pregnant maternal bodies, given that women are bound to social bodily norms. Dworkin and Sachs note that "[t]he female body is often framed as failing in myriad ways so as to encourage adherence to an always shifting, idealized feminine form" (Dworkin and Sachs 611). They further state that because "the pregnant body is particularly resistant to containment", pregnant women largely feel unattractive during pregnancy (Dworkin and Sachs 612). It is perhaps for these reasons that breastfeeding is promoted as an attractive option to women seeking to return to their pre-pregnant form.

In summary, the "Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution" YouTube video links to the Western cultural phenomenon of bump watch through its use discursive practices such as

its links to the good mother, as the good mother is one who breastfeeds her child. The video effectively asserts the supremacy of breastfeeding in terms of cost benefits, efficiency, perceived social and cultural benefits, and drawing on emotional constructs that breastfeeding is a magical experience for mother and infant. The “Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution” video is also highly effective in its use of new media. Although it is styled as a public service announcement, through its location on The Bump.com website and YouTube, it has a further reach than previous television-based public service announcements.

## **Conclusion**

In this major research paper I have examined the recent cultural phenomenon of bump watch, a surveillance system thrust upon women deemed to be of ‘child bearing age.’ Women’s bodies are a part of the public realm and are under constant social scrutiny. This is true for all women but becomes especially relevant for women who are pregnant or women who are thinking of becoming pregnant. Once a woman becomes pregnant or is socially read as pregnant, a new set of highly performative rules, prescriptions, and surveillance are thrust upon her. Socially it is thought that her life and her choices are no longer her own, rather, she falls under social scrutiny which will be ever present throughout her pregnancy and likely post-pregnancy through parenthood. The current cultural phenomenon of bump watch is merely a name for a new variation on the longstanding social surveillance of women. Through bump watch, a woman’s physique is under surveillance, coercing her into the Western ideal of slenderness, and her sexuality is also under surveillance, especially if she is not known to be in a

heterosexual monogamous relationship. I have examined how bump watch enforces women's conformity to Western ideals of beauty and slenderness during pregnancy and post-pregnancy. If a pregnancy is confirmed, performative requirements become far more coercive, and can be punishable by law.

I have used Foucault's related theories of Panopticism, surveillance, biopower, and docility as the foundations of my analysis, and deepened my analysis through the use of feminist and critical race scholars such as Sherene Razack, Andrea Smith, and Susan Bordo, among others. These theorists provided tools with which I analyzed and critiqued the hegemonic status of motherhood, norms of appropriate motherhood and womanhood, and bump watch as a discursive and surveillance practice. I then analyzed three recent media texts; including reality television personality Bethenny Frankel, the Bump Watch Pregnancy Tracker iPhone app, and an Internet video clip about breastfeeding.

Throughout my analysis I have aimed to incorporate Razack's theory of interlocking oppressions, in order to examine whom the discursive subject is, who the target audience is, and the impacts of who is left out of this dominant discourse.

## Works cited

- Arendell, Terry. "Conceiving and Investigating Motherhood: The Decade's Scholarship." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62.4 (2000): 1192-1207.
- "Baby Won't Wait." *Bethenny Getting Married?*. Dir. Matt Elkind. Bravo Television. 22 Jul. 2010. Television.
- "Bethenny's Bio." *Bethenny.com*. N.p. n.d. Web. Apr. 2011.  
<http://www.bethenny.com/bethenny/bio/>
- Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Braidotti, Rosi. "Mothers, Monsters, and Machines." *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. Ed. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 59-79.
- "Breastfeeding: Join the Boob-olution." *The BumpTV*. 2010. Web. 3 April 2011.  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheBumpTV#p/c/2EE179B49A6F2A26/0/7SM7Hvjqny4>
- Brown, Jessica Autumn and Myra Marx Ferree. "Close Your Eyes and Think of England: Pronatalism in the British Print Media" *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), pp. 5-24
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Arts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. Ed. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 401-417.
- "Cost of Raising Your Child." *The Healthy Belly*. N. p. n. d. Web. 3 Apr. 2011.  
[http://www.thehealthybelly.com/baby\\_cost\\_calculator.php](http://www.thehealthybelly.com/baby_cost_calculator.php)
- Dworkin, Shari L. and Faye Linda Wachs. "'Getting Your Body Back': Postindustrial Fit Motherhood in Shape Fit Pregnancy Magazine." *Gender and Society* 18.5 (2004): 610-624.
- "Exclusive: Bethenny Frankel: I Was 'Obsessed With Dieting'." *US Weekly*. (2011): February 2011. N. pag. Web. April 2011.  
<http://www.usmagazine.com/healthylifestyle/news/bethenny-frankel-i-was-obsessed-with-dieting-2011172>

- “Exclusive: Bethenny Frankel in Size-4 Swimsuit 3 Weeks After Baby!” *US Weekly*. (2010): June 2010. N. pag. Web. April 2011.  
<http://www.usmagazine.com/momsbabies/news/bethenny-frankel-in-size-4-swimsuit-3-weeks-after-baby-201026>
- “Exclusive Photos: Bethenny Frankel Shares Untouched Nude Pic With Us.” *US Weekly*. (2009): December 2009. N. pag. Web. Apr. 2011.  
<http://www.usmagazine.com/celebritynews/news/bethenny-frankel-shares-untouched-nude-photo-with-us-20091912>
- Frankel, Bethenny. “My Thoughts on Breastfeeding.” *Bethenny.com*. N.p. n.d. Web. Apr. 2011. <http://www.bethenny.com/2011/02/14/my-thoughts-on-breastfeeding/>
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- “Getting More Than Married.” *Bethenny Getting Married?*. Dir. Matt Elkind. Bravo Television. 5 Aug. 2010. Television.
- Haraway, Donna J. “The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order.” *Feminist Review*, No. 55, Consuming Cultures (Spring, 1997), pp. 22-7
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. and Avila, E. "I'm Here, but I'm There": The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood. *Gender and Society* 11.5, (1997): 548-571.
- Jennings, P. K. “The Trouble with the Multiethnic Placement Act: An Empirical Look at Transracial Adoption.” *Sociological Perspectives* 49.4 (2006): 559-581.
- Lorde, Audre. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Colour*. Eds. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Colour Press, 1988. 98-101.
- Lubomirski, Alexi. *Britney Spears*. 2006. *Harper’s Bazaar*. Hearst publishing. Aug. 2006.
- Magnet, Shoshana and Kelly Gates . “Introduction. Communicating Surveillance: Examining the Intersections.” *The New Media of Surveillance*. Ed. Shoshana Magnet and Kelly Gates. Oxon: Routledge, 2009. 1-17.
- Maher, Janet Marie. “Visibly Pregnant: Toward a Placental Body.” *Feminist Review* 72 (2002): 95-107.
- Murray, Heather. “Monstrous Play in Negative Spaces: Illegible Bodies and the Cultural Construction of Biometric Technology.” *The New Media of Surveillance*. Ed. Magnet, Shoshana and Kelly Gates. Oxon: Routledge, 2009. 69-87.

- "New Alliances." *The Real Housewives of New York City*. Exec. Prod. Jennifer O'Connell et. al. Bravo Television. 4 Mar. 2010. Television.
- "New Girl, Old Money." *The Real Housewives of New York City*. Exec. Prod. Jennifer O'Connell et. al. Bravo Television. 15 Apr. 2010. Television.
- "Privacy Policy." *The Healthy Belly*. N. p. n. d. Web. 3 Apr. 2011. [http://www.thehealthybelly.com/privacy\\_policy.php](http://www.thehealthybelly.com/privacy_policy.php)
- Rabinow, Paul and Nikolas Rose, eds. *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. New York: The New Press, 2003.
- Razack, Sherene H. *Looking White People in the Eye. Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. New York: South End Press, 2005.
- Stabile, Carol. "Shooting the Mother. Fetal Photography and the Politics of Disappearance." *The Visible Woman: Imaging Technologies, Gender and Science*. Ed. Paula A. Treichler, Lisa Cartwright, Constance Penley. New York: New York University Press, 1998. 171-197.
- "Stay on Message." *The Real Housewives of New York City*. Exec. Prod. Jennifer O'Connell et. al. Bravo Television. 29 Apr. 2010. Television.
- Teen Mom*. Creator Lauren Dolgen. MTV Television. 2009. Television.
- The Bump*. 2008. Web. 3 Apr. 2011. <http://www.thebump.com/>
- The BumpTV YouTube Channel*. 2008. Web. 3 April 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheBumpTV>
- The Healthy Belly*. N.p. n. d. Web. 3 Apr. 2011. <http://www.thehealthybelly.com>
- "The Healthy Belly Bump Watch Tracker." *The Healthy Belly*. N.p. n. d. Web. 3 Apr. 2011. <http://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/bump-watch/id416070117?mt=8>
- "The Honeymoon is Over." *Bethenny Getting Married?*. Dir. Matt Elkind. Bravo Television. 15 Jul. 2010. Television.
- Wegar, K. "Adoption, Family Ideology, and Social Stigma: Bias in Community Attitudes, Adoption Research, and Practice." *Family Relations* 49.4 (2000): 363-370.

## Appendix

Figure 1- Bethenny Frankel posing in a bathing suit three weeks post pregnancy. Photo credit Sarah Jaye Weiss/US Weekly

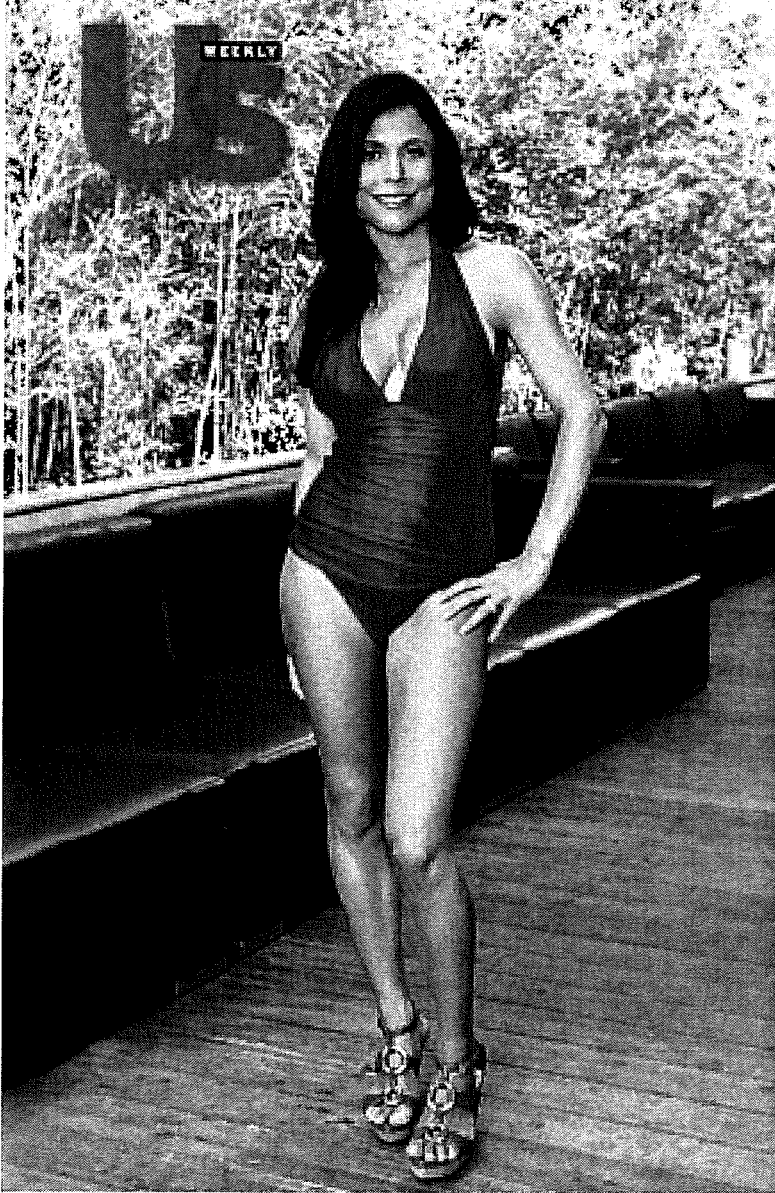


Figure 2- Bethenny Frankel on the cover of US Weekly magazine. Photo credit: Perry Hagopian/US Weekly

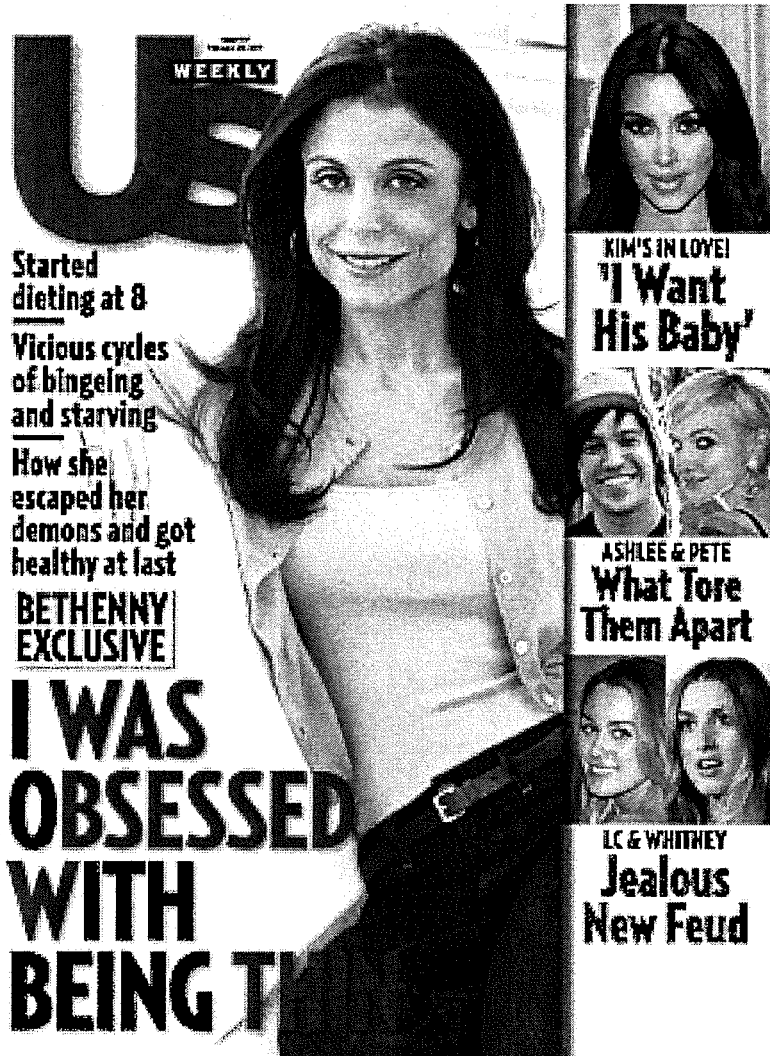


Figure 3- Bump Watch iPhone App, from the Healthy Belly. com. 2011. Promotional image accessed via <http://www.downloadcheapapp.com/apping/44408/bump-watch-screenshot-1.jpg>

