In Good Hope

Jacquelyne Luce, Lancaster University, GB, Ninette Rothmüller, Lancaster University, GB, and University of Osnabrueck, Germany

Presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference
August 20-24, 2003 Lund University, Sweden

In this paper we will ask: How can women—experiencing their bodies through technologically mediated cultural processes and practices—interpret their own subjectivity in relation to the subjectified fetus. A number of key works have explored the making of the fetal subject (Duden 2002; Mitchell 2001; Samerski 2002). This significant body of literature focuses on the relationships between reproductive technologies and fetal subjectivity, emphasizing contemporary distinctions between fetal and maternal selves and bodies. It is often suggested that women are rendered invisible as the fetus becomes increasingly visible as a subject at risk. Hope within these contexts is linked to conceptualizations of technological progress, consumption of reproductive technologies and as in a direct relation to risk. Building on this work we aim to open up a space to think about the possibilities for women to be ‘in good hope’ in times of cultural and analytic focus on risk. We will bring together work we have completed individually in various cultural, economic, political and national contexts. Drawing on analyses of historical sources about societal and medical discourses of pregnancy as well as semi-structured and open-ended interviews from qualitative research we will create a path for communication between women living in different ages.