

Challenging the social sciences through the visual arts: reconsidering Foucault in the light of Field's *Little Children* (2006)

Adrian Konik and Inge Konik

Department of Journalism, Media and Philosophy, School of Language, Media and Culture,
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa
E-mail: akonik@nmmu.ac.za and ingenow@webmail.co.za

Taking as its point of departure the validity of Michel Foucault's ideas concerning disciplinary power, bio-power, and the privileged position of sexuality as a focal point of their combination, this article furnishes a genealogical contextualisation of the behaviour of, and the conflicts between, certain of the characters in Field's *Little Children* (2006). Such an analysis is undertaken, firstly, in the interest of demonstrating the value of Field's film as a critical cinematic text that reflects upon disciplinary/bio-power as problematic – through the use of parody and tragedy – and secondly, in the interest of considering the consequent relationship between the social sciences and such forms of visual art. That is, firstly, most mainstream Hollywood films include within their narratives only conflicts between characters that can easily be resolved, in a normative fashion, within the ambit of the disciplinary/bio-power discourses that constitute their context. However, in contrast, Field's *Little Children* implicitly thematises as problematic the ways in which such disciplinary/bio-power discourses both inform subjectivity and dictate the normative parameters of social interaction. Consequently, unlike most other Hollywood films, it refrains from complicity with the discursive regimes of the contemporary era. Secondly, because Field's film emerged from *within* the domain of Hollywood, its failure to comply in this regard provides strong evidence of a growth in *popular* critical awareness, which stands to challenge the validity of social science theories that continue to construe the disciplinary/bio-power subject as discursively myopic. This is because, as part of mainstream culture, Field's *Little Children* indicates a dissolution of naivety and a concomitant growth in critical awareness on the part of disciplinary/bio-power subjects – in relation to both their discursive environment and the way in which this environment informs their subjectivity. Moreover, as will be discussed, Field's film is also not entirely a product of fiction, but rather echoes and reflects both extant social problems and forms of discursive transformation currently underway in relation to them. As such, the social sciences, to avoid falling into the trap of redundancy, can scarcely afford to ignore its implications, and the implications of similar films.

Key words: disciplinary power, bio-power, genealogical analysis, discourse, sexuality

'n Uitdaging aan die sosiale wetenskappe vanuit die visuele kunste: 'n heroorweging van Foucault in die lig van Field se *Little Children* (2006)

Hierdie artikel neem die geldigheid van Michel Foucault se opvattinge oor dissiplinêre mag, bio-mag en die gepriviligeerde posisie van seksualiteit as 'n snypunt van albei, as uitgangspunt. Op daardie basis bied dit 'n genealogiese kontekstualisering van die gedrag van, en die konflik tussen, sekere karakters in Field se *Little Children* (2006). Hierdie analise word onderneem, eerstens ten einde die waarde van Field se film as 'n kinematiese teks wat – met gebruikmaking van parodie en tragedie – oor dissiplinêre/bio-mag as problematies reflekteer, te demonstreer; en, tweedens, ten einde die daaruit voortvloeiende verhouding tussen die sosiale wetenskappe en sodanige vorms van visuele kuns te oorweeg. Eerstens, die narratiewe van die meeste hoofstroom Hollywood films sluit slegs konflikte in tussen karakters wat maklik op 'n normatiewe wyse binne die raamwerk van die dissiplinêre/bio-mag wat hul konteks konstitueer, opgelos kan word. Field se *Little Children* daarenteen tematiseer implisiet sowel die wyses waarop sulke dissiplinêre/bio-mag diskoerse subjektiwiteit informeer, asook die normatiewe parameters van sosiale interaksie, as problematies. Anders as die meeste ander Hollywood films, weerhou hierdie film sig gevolglik van medepligtigheid aan die diskursiewe regimes van die kontemporêre tydperk. Tweedens, aangesien Field se film uit die Hollywood-domein voortgekom het, lewer die onwilligheid van hierdie film om by die norm in te val, sterk bewys van 'n sekere ontwikkeling in die populêre kritiese bewussyn; dit rig 'n uitdaging aan die geldigheid van sosiaal-wetenskaplike teorieë wat steeds die dissiplinêre/bio-mag subjek as onkrities voorstel. Die rede daarvoor is dat Field se *Little Children*, ofskoon deel van die hoofstroom kultuur, nogtans 'n breuk in naïwiteit asook 'n gepaardgaande ontwikkeling van 'n kritiese besef betreffende die subjekte van die dissiplinêre/bio-mag, aandui – in verhouding tot hul diskursiewe omgewing, asook die wyse waarop daardie omgewing hul subjektiwiteit informeer. Bowendien is (soos ons sal aandui) Field se film nie geheel en al die produk van fiksie nie; intendeel, dit eggo en weerspieël sowel bestaande sosiale probleme as vorme van diskursiewe transformasie wat huidiglik met betrekking tot albei aan die ontwikkel is. Ten einde nie in die strik van oortolligheid te beland nie, kan die sosiale wetenskappe dit beswaarlik bekostig om die implikasies van hierdie en soortgelyke films te ignoreer.

Sleutelwoorde: dissiplinêre mag, bio-mag, genealogiese analise, diskoers, seksualiteit

Critical themes in mainstream Hollywood cinema are rare; however, when they do occur, they can potentially signify a subtle but important shift in the socio-cultural *mores* of both America and those countries that follow it as an exemplar.¹ Consequently, such critical

themes can, albeit implicitly, challenge the continued validity of certain social science theories (or at least aspects thereof), insofar as the changes in socio-cultural *mores* they indicate can render particular theoretical claims either partially or entirely anachronistic. Arguably, Field's film *Little Children* (2006) is a case in point, insofar as it not only parodies the social dynamics of disciplinary/bio-power – which were first drawn into conspicuity by Michel Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The Will to Knowledge* (1976) – but also characterises as tragic our impotence to free ourselves from such societal imperatives.² However, the latter characterisation notwithstanding, Field's film cannot but constitute a tentative step toward such freedom, because to reflect critically on a problem, to hold it circumspectly at arm's length, as it were, and objectify it, is indissociable from a curtailment of its power to inform one's subjectivity. And this curtailment stands to become progressively more pronounced in proportion to the extent of one's critical reflection. To be sure, such critical reflection on disciplinary/bio-power has long been commonplace, on the one hand, in academia, where Foucault's above mentioned texts have served as the conceptual points of departure for a host of discussions and publications, and, on the other hand, within the radical periphery of alternative culture, the practices of which often entail a dramatic articulation of the dynamics theorised by Foucault.³ Yet, what makes Field's *Little Children* particularly important is that it emerged from, and continues to operate within, neither of these domains; rather, as a Hollywood film, it constitutes part of the conservative centre of mainstream culture. That is, when a Hollywood film, shot in classical realist fashion, and starring the likes of Kate Winslet and Patrick Wilson, broaches the issue of disciplinary/bio-power *as* problematic – through the use of parody and tragedy – it indicates quite strongly that critical reflection on this social phenomenon has expanded beyond the bounds of academia and alternative culture, into the heart of mainstream culture. If one concedes that this is at least partially the case, then one is obliged to answer the question of how 'integral' the disciplinary/bio-power subject remains. To clarify, it would appear that the discursively myopic historical subject of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – a subject only drawn into conspicuity by Foucault in the latter part of the twentieth century – has subsequently, in the twenty-first century, grown critically aware of its conditions and its history. Consequently, although this subject may continue to follow a disciplinary/bio-power trajectory into the future, it does so now with increasing self-consciousness. What the result of this growing self-consciousness will be for disciplinary/bio-power society, only time will tell. However, with a view to propagating the social transformation evinced by the critical orientation of Field's *Little Children*, in this article, the use of parody and tragedy in the film – in relation to disciplinary/bio-power – will be explored, with a view to supporting a critical re-appraisal, on the part of social science, of disciplinary/bio-power subjectivity. Accordingly, the first part of this article provides a brief overview of Foucault's ideas of disciplinary power and bio-power, along with a synopsis of the collective effects of this discursive regime on subjectivity. Then, after a short discussion of both Foucaultian critique and the manner in which such critique occurs at a cinematic level, the reflections of Foucaultian theoretical perspectives in Field's film – indicated through the use of parody and tragedy – will be elaborated upon. Finally, this article concludes by referring to additional documentary evidence of the *dissolving* naivety of the disciplinary/bio-power subject.

The infantilization of the disciplinary/bio-power subject

On the one hand, in *Society Must Be Defended*,⁴ Foucault attributes the rise of 'disciplinary power' to the dissolution of monarchic rule in the eighteenth century. In short, he explains that, during this period, 'sovereign power,' which (1) applied to property and produce, (2) concerned itself with the general (rather than intensive) production of commodities, (3) exercised authority

through quasi-feudal systems of taxation and obligation, and (4) depended upon the physical existence of a king, was replaced by disciplinary power. In terms of technique, disciplinary power can be perceived as almost the converse of its 'sovereign' predecessor. This is because disciplinary power (1) "applies primarily to bodies and what they do[, (2) makes]...it possible to extract time and labor from bodies[, (3) is]...exercised through constant surveillance[, and (4)]...presuppose[s]...a closely meshed grid of material coercions" (Foucault 2003b: 36). Furthermore, all of these techniques are consonant with what Foucault designates as the underlying principle of disciplinary power, namely the idea that "there ha[s]...to be an increase both in the subjugated forces[,] and in the force and efficacy of that which subjugate[s]...them" (Foucault 2003b: 36). That is, for Foucault, the specific techniques employed in the disciplinary economy of power actuate such a principle, because by incorporating

all devices that...ensure the spatial distribution of individual bodies (their separation, their alignment, their serialization, and their surveillance) and the organization, around those individuals, of a whole field of visibility[, these]...techniques could be used to take control over bodies[, and]...to increase their productive force through exercise, drill and so on...in the least costly way possible. (Foucault 2003b: 242)

On the other hand, in this same lecture series, Foucault locates the emergence of 'bio-power' toward the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century, and argues that, even though this new technology of power was not disciplinary as such, it did "not exclude disciplinary technology [but]...dovetail[ed] into it...and above all, use[d] it by...embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques" (Foucault 2003b: 242). In other words, Foucault explicitly cautions against perceiving bio-power – involving "regulatory controls...[and] a bio-politics of the population" – as less of an encroachment on the individual than disciplinary power, which involved "an anatomic-politics of the human body" (Foucault 1998: 139). Instead, he advances that, although "the body of society...becomes the new principle in the nineteenth century [which]...needs to be protected, in a quasi-medical sense," it is important to remember that the "great fantasy...of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very *bodies of individuals*" [my italics](Foucault 1975: 55).

Of paramount importance to the argument of this article is Foucault's linking of disciplinary power and bio-power to 'sexuality,' as well as his consequent dedication of much of his later work to "grasp[ing] the positive mechanism which, producing sexuality in this or that fashion, results in misery" (Foucault 1977a: 113). That is, his endeavour to grapple with the way in which sexuality – although a discursive construct which can be debunked through a tracing of its origins and historical development – nevertheless continues to engender particularly potent forms of individual and social woe. Briefly, in this regard, Foucault attributes the overarching importance that was granted to sexuality in the nineteenth century – and which allowed it to function as the fulcrum of "a whole series of relationships: children and parents, students and educators, patients and psychiatrists, delinquents and experts" (Foucault 1998: 63) – to the manner in which sexuality constitutes a point where the mechanisms and aims of disciplinary power and bio-power meet, and are particularly interwoven. Foucault advances that,

on the one hand, sexuality, being an eminently corporeal mode of behaviour, is a matter for individualizing disciplinary controls that take the form of permanent surveillance. [Yet, on the other hand,]...because it also has procreative effects, sexuality is also inscribed...in broad biological processes that concern not the bodies of individuals but...the multiple unity of the population. Sexuality exists *at the point where body and population meet*. And so it is a matter for discipline, but also a matter for regularization. [my italics](Foucault 2003b: 251-252)

Correspondingly, argues Foucault, from this privileged position of sexuality, between organism and population, a medical concept of degeneracy emerged. In terms of this concept, "sexuality... has effects at two levels[; firstly,]...the undisciplined body...is immediately sanctioned by all the individual diseases that the sexual debauchee brings down upon himself[; and secondly,]...

debauched, perverted sexuality has effects at the level of the population” (Foucault 2003b: 252). Further, Foucault maintains that four “figures emerged from this preoccupation with sex...which were also targets and anchorage points for...ventures of knowledge: the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult” (Foucault 1998: 105). To clarify, against the first *positive* figure of the ‘Malthusian couple’ – who happily shouldered biological responsibility to the social body via acquiescence to a vast range of medical prescriptions relating to procreation – the three remaining *negative* figures were juxtaposed. That is, while the figure of the ‘hysterical woman’ was advanced as the unavoidable consequence of the inherent pathological sexuality that was supposed to saturate the feminine body, the figure of the ‘masturbating child’ derived from a belief in (and fear of) the tremendous psychological and social dangers that children’s sexuality was thought to precipitate. In turn, the figure of the ‘perverse adult’ stemmed from ever more encompassing and pervasive psychiatric analyses of ostensibly perverse pleasures – analyses which were all undertaken with a view to proposing remedial measures that might steer the individual in question along a path to recovery, defined against the benchmark of the ‘Malthusian couple’ (Foucault 1998: 104-105). In short, according to Foucault, the pervasive (and invasive) disempowerment of the disciplinary/bio-power subject followed from these developments. And such disempowerment grew in proportion to the augmentation of the status of the medical practitioner, who attained an increasingly “politically privileged position in the eighteenth century, prior to his accumulation of economic and social privileges in the nineteenth century” (Foucault 1976: 177).

The effects on subjectivity of the above amalgamation of disciplinary and bio-power discursive regimes are perhaps nowhere more succinctly thematised than in “Intellectuals and Power.” Here, Foucault and Deleuze compare contemporary adults to *little children*, as a consequence of the prolonged process of ‘infantilization’ to which they have been subjected (Foucault 1972: 209-210); a process indissociable from disciplinary/bio-power. In effect, what is advanced is that, on the one hand, from the eighteenth century disciplinary “projects of docility[, involving a]...meticulous observation of detail...for the control and use of men,...the *man* of modern humanism was born” [my italics](Foucault 1991: 136). However, on the other hand, this *man* was not only rendered increasingly docile and prostrate through the panoptical surveillance to which he was subjected, which engendered in him “a state of conscious and *permanent* visibility that assure[d] the automatic functioning of power” [my italics](Foucault 1991: 201). In addition, he was also thereby rendered increasingly *childlike*. This was because of the dovetailing of such disciplinary surveillance technologies with the discursive apparatus of bio-power, which filled him with similarly *permanent* doubt over both his capacity to understand himself, and his ability to exercise autonomy over the sexual forces within him. Owing to the virtual discursive somnambulism that ensued from the growing credence with which bio-power became imbued, Foucault goes so far as to term bio-power “a network or circuit of...somato-power, which acts as the formative matrix of sexuality as the historical and cultural phenomenon within which we seem at once to recognize and lose ourselves” (Foucault 1977b: 186). Briefly, to ‘recognise’ oneself in the prefabricated categories of bio-power – to regard oneself as a being possessed by, rather than possessed of, a powerful and erratic sexuality – is also to ‘lose’ oneself, as such recognition is antithetical to an appraisal of oneself as a rationally autonomous being, capable of self-transparency, self-control and self-*possession*.

Critiquing disciplinary/bio-power

Arguably, it is *against* such disempowerment through both disciplinary power and bio-power that Foucault’s work, particularly from the mid-1970s onward, is directed. In this regard, the focus of his second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, namely *The Use of Pleasure* and *The*

Care of the Self, explore the way in which, for centuries prior to the overarching constitution of disciplinary/bio-power subjectivity, individuals constituted their own subjectivity, so to speak, in relatively idiosyncratic fashions, through various changing practices of what he terms the ‘care of the self.’ These practices involved, among other things, exercises in moderation, temperance, forbearance, and meditation. However, Foucault’s growing interest in these practices in no way indicates his descent into apolitical nostalgia, but rather comprises part of his eminently political engagement with the present. Indeed, in “The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault not only warns against such nostalgia, which is based on the erroneous notion that “at a certain moment, philosophy went astray and forgot something, that somewhere in its history there is a principle...that must be rediscovered.” In addition, he also, in direct opposition to such a view, emphasises that through theoretical contact with the past, something new is invariably *produced* (Foucault 1984: 294-295). Moreover, in “The Subject and Power,” Foucault clearly advances the importance of *producing* such alternatives, because of the dire need “to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of th[e] kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries” (Foucault 1982: 336). His position in this regard is neatly summed up in his 1981-1982 lecture series, entitled *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, in which he unequivocally asserts “that there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself” (Foucault 2005: 252). Analogously, in his subsequent lecture series in 1983, entitled *Fearless Speech*, he further stresses the importance of problematising the discursive idols of the present through *parrhesia*, or open, honest and critical speech (Foucault 2001: 169-173).

In the contemporary era, such critical speech is arguably most apposite and effective when it takes as its point of departure genealogical forms of analysis, entailing the “coupling together of scholarly erudition and local memories, [which]...allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics” (Foucault 2003b: 8).⁵ It can, of course, scarcely be missed that Foucault’s articulation of this critical approach employs distinctly military metaphors – metaphors which are, moreover, entirely consonant with those employed by him in many of his other discussions concerning discursive regimes and the possibility of resisting them. Nevertheless, this remains an important issue to emphasise in terms of the current argument, because while every “society has its régime of truth, [or]...types of discourse which it accepts and *makes function as true*” [my italics](Foucault 1977c: 131), it also has its marginal voices that critique the veracity of such manufactured truth, and proffer alternatives to its hegemonic claims. In other words, as Foucault explains elsewhere, just beneath the seemingly placid acceptance of the discourses of the day which operate as ‘laws’ in society, “war continues to rage in all the mechanisms of power.” That is, “a battlefield runs through the whole of society, continuously and permanently, and it is this battlefield that puts us all on one side or the other. There is *no such thing as a neutral subject*” [my italics](Foucault 2003b: 50-51).

However, just as subjects are either complicit with, or antagonistic to, the discursive regime of disciplinary/bio-power, so too, cinematic texts can never be neutral. Rather, they necessarily either sanction and endorse the societal status quo, or critique it through thematising its shortcomings and arbitrariness. Admittedly, the latter practice usually follows a considerable time after a process of discursive transformation has begun, insofar as critical cinematic texts usually take as their point of departure already *instantiated* critical perspectives – such as those articulated in academia, or those reflected in the practices of the radical periphery of alternative culture. The reason for this, as Christian Metz explains, rests with the problem of intelligibility. In short, “*filmic narrativity*...by becoming stable through convention and repetition over innumerable films, has gradually shaped itself into forms more or less fixed[;]...if they were to change, it could only be through a complete positive evolution, liable to be challenged – like...

in spoken languages” (Metz 1968: 73). In other words, the various rules by means of which the cinematic text as a whole is rendered comprehensible to its audience cannot be too radically altered, or too rapidly excised. This is because the incomprehensibility that would ensue from such drastic attempts to prematurely force the ‘development’ of cinematic language, would all too easily result in the economic failure of the film in question – along with its political failure for that matter, insofar as its critical message would fail to be effectively disseminated. What this, in effect, means is that cinema is obliged to practice patience, as it were, until the critical perspectives and critical practices of, respectively, academia and the radical periphery of alternative culture, have become sufficiently established to serve as a comprehensible topic for mainstream discussion and comment. At this point, as Metz advances, “the originality of creative artists consists...in tricking the [mainstream cinematic] code, or at least in using it ingeniously, rather than in attacking it directly or in violating it” (Metz 1968: 74).

Arguably, Field’s *Little Children* is incisive in this regard, insofar as it ‘tricks’ the disciplinary/bio-power code by being critical of this discursive regime *within* the very heart of mainstream culture. That is, as a Hollywood film, shot in classical realist fashion and starring the likes of Kate Winslet and Patrick Wilson, at first glance Field’s film appears to be a product that kowtows to the normative standards of mainstream culture. Indeed, the film neither attacks the disciplinary/bio-power code directly, nor attempts to explicitly violate this code. However, a more circumspect approach to the text reveals this to be merely a veneer of complicity with the discursive status quo. This is because the narrative of Field’s *Little Children* not only broaches the issue of disciplinary/bio-power *as* problematic, but also does this ingeniously through the use of parody and tragedy – such that the troubling implications of its content linger long after the denouement of the film. This allows its critical message to be effectively disseminated among mainstream audiences.

The use of parody in Field’s *Little Children*

Field’s film commences in a manner that makes explicit the primary themes and critical discursive trajectories of its narrative. The establishing shot of the film focuses on a room filled with clocks and kitsch figurines of children exuding innocence. These items symbolise, respectively, the disciplinary regimentation of bodily activity through timetables that “establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, [and] regulate the cycles of repetition” (Foucault 1991: 149), and bourgeois society’s vehement repression of “infantile sexuality[,] to the point where it refused even to speak of it or acknowledge its existence” (Foucault 1977c: 120). Immediately thereafter, the focus shifts to a news broadcast concerning the commotion caused by the return, to a quiet American suburb, of convicted sex offender Ronald James McGorvey (Jackie Earle Haley), after two years of incarceration for the crime of exposing himself to a child. According to the report, the community of Woodward Court, in protest over the return of a man they regard as a threat to their children, formed a special committee to distribute posters warning of McGorvey’s presence in the area. Briefly, the content of this news report neatly reflects Foucault’s theorisations concerning the manner in which disciplinary/bio-power both propagates “the exclusion of delinquents” (Foucault 1975: 55), and instigates “the homogeneity of social response [that,]...aimed at the dangerous individual...who is not exactly ill and who is not strictly speaking criminal[, reveals]...the existence of a...protective continuum throughout the social body” (Foucault 2003a: 33-34). Later in the film, this protective continuum is effectively parodied in a scene in which all the bathers at the local swimming pool exit the water with exaggerated panic, when they realise that McGorvey is among them. This leaves McGorvey isolated in the pool, swimming with the lazy fluid motion of a shark – until he is ordered out and

escorted off the premises by security guards, who remain deaf to his defence that he was only trying to escape the heat of the day.

The comical nature of this scene aside, the reasons for the *severity* of the community's reaction to the return of this representative of the 'perverse adult' – one of the three negative anchorage points of sexuality – can, perhaps, only be adequately comprehended when one considers the *problematizing* nature of McGorvey's 'criminal' activities. That is, these activities problematise, firstly, the bourgeois disavowal of the abominable figure of the 'masturbating child,' and secondly, the bourgeois valorisation of the ethical figure of the 'Malthusian couple.' To clarify, firstly, McGorvey poses an immense threat to the discursive integrity of disciplinary/bio-power that, "via the medium of families[, established]... a system of control of sexuality,... allied to corporal persecution,... over the bodies of children" (Foucault 1975: 57). This is because McGorvey's sexual interest in children implicitly validates the reality of the 'masturbating child,' insofar as it emphasises the sexuality of children, and thereby reminds parents that their children are possessed of sexual urges and inclinations – all of which exacerbate the position of the child's "body [as an]... issue of a conflict between parents and children" (Foucault 1975: 57). Secondly, McGorvey, as a manifestation of the 'perverse adult' on account of his anomalous behaviour, concomitantly spurns the ideal figure of the 'Malthusian couple,' insofar as his sexual *disinterest* in adults and consequent rejection of marriage contravene the bourgeois model of disciplinary/bio-power conjugality. As discussed, this model of the "legitimate and procreative couple... laid down the law[,]... enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth, and reserved the right to speak" (Foucault 1998: 3).

However, as the film proceeds, the irony of this 'right to speak' on matters pertaining to sex, which the bourgeois 'Malthusian couple' arrogate to themselves, is brought to light, as it becomes patently clear that such couples do not speak so much as they are spoken by, the discourses of disciplinary/bio-power. This much is evident from a number of discussions that take place among a group of suburban housewives who, on a daily basis, gather in a park to oversee their children's play. Most explicitly, these women's adherence to the disciplinary regimentation of even their 'Malthusian' sexual activities – through their rigorous observation of a sexual timetable – is neatly evinced in the testimony of the dominating character of Mary Ann (Mary B. McCann). She boldly advances that her husband and herself engage in sexual intercourse once per week with clockwork regularity, in accordance with a strict time schedule, and that such rigid time allocation for sex is crucial to any healthy sexual relationship. Moreover, as their conversation progresses, the disciplinary/bio-power orientation of their subjectivity emerges further through their related unshakable belief that analogous disciplinary regimentation is essential to maintaining the integrity of the family unit. In short, it emerges that they apply a timetable not only to their other marital commitments, but also to their relations with their children. Yet, the legitimacy of this explicit fixation on *regimen* – expounded most ardently by Mary Ann, but uncritically acquiesced to by all of the other mothers excepting Sarah (Kate Winslet) – is problematised by the latter. During part of her narration, Sarah adopts Mary Ann's register and, in a cynical voice, mockingly echoes her disciplinary/bio-power dictums on the need for *regimented* eating, drinking, marital activity, and parenting.

Significantly, this initial critical whisper soon becomes more audible when Sarah, again through parody, begins to contest the legitimacy of the continued persecution of McGorvey. Briefly, during the discussion that these women hold concerning the release of McGorvey, all except Sarah impulsively censure him and suggest that he be summarily castrated – both for the crime of sexualising the body of a child, and for seeking affirmation of his own sexuality from this sexualised child. Yet, paradoxically, apart from Sarah, these women concomitantly afford themselves the right to sexualise the bodies of their own children.⁶ In short, while they openly

discuss their fascination with their children's genitals, one woman in particular comments with delight on her discovery that her young son's penis is comparable in size to an adult male's penis. Similarly, in relation to what they perceive as McGorvey's 'perverse' activity, these women again exhibit double standards. That is, one of them admits that when she was young her older brother used to expose himself to her in the same manner that McGorvey exposed himself to a child, but that, unwilling to get him into trouble, she did nothing about it. Crucially, it is at this point that Sarah – evidently exasperated by the uncritical application of such double standards – draws critical attention to their statements. While, on the one hand, she emphasises the sexual sadism that underpins their desire to castrate McGorvey, through her parodic suggestion that his castrated member be displayed in spectacular fashion at the local school, on the other hand, she parodies their sense of justice, by suggesting the perfunctory extension of such draconian punishment to the woman's 'perverse' brother.

In effect, what Sarah thereby draws attention to is both the moral double standards of the women, and, more importantly, the indissociability of power, desire and knowledge. Foucault clarifies such indissociability when he advances that "power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression;" and that, instead, "power is strong...because...it *produces* effects at the level of *desire* – and also at the level of *knowledge*" [my italics](Foucault 1975: 59). It is notable that all of the above mentioned characters encountered in Field's *Little Children* – that is, both the various women and McGorvey – remain mesmerised by the idea of the body as infused with an enigmatic sexual power that makes it, simultaneously, a repository of truth. This notion, as Foucault indicates in *The Will to Knowledge*, was part of a new *scientia sexualis* that replaced the earlier Greek *ars erotica*,⁷ and which, "linked to the economy through numerous and subtle relays, the main one of which...is the body[,]...has been expanding at an increasing rate since the seventeenth century" (Foucault 1998: 58, 106-107). In particular, the linking of the sexualised body with the economy via internet pornography is strongly thematised in Field's film, through Sarah's husband's 'uncontrollable' infatuation with an internet porn star – to the point where masturbation over images of her replaces sexual intercourse with his wife. As such, not only McGorvey, but also Sarah's female acquaintances from the park and her own husband, Richard (Gregg Edelman), all remain transfixed by the idea that the body, on account of the sexuality it ostensibly harbours, contains an elusive yet awe-inspiring 'truth.' For McGorvey, this 'truth' is approximated both through drawing close to the bodies of children (where it is supposed to hide), and through revealing his body to them, in order to see in their reaction a mirror image of his own (elusive) sexual 'truth.' In turn, for Sarah's female acquaintances, this 'truth' is approximated during their socially sanctioned inspection of their own children's genitals, and their exclusive right to approach such 'truth' in this way is defended through their imagined castration of McGorvey, for his *profane* endeavour to do the same. Analogously, for Richard, this 'truth' is approximated through a *ritual* of masturbation over internet pornography, as though by means of a repetitive combination of monotonous sexual imagery and self-stimulation, this 'truth' can be momentarily glimpsed. Accordingly, Sarah's parodic response to her husband's preoccupation with internet pornography is also strongly applicable to the analogous preoccupations of her female acquaintances and McGorvey. That is, having discovered Richard's ritual, she proceeds to treat sex neither as a means to revelation, as McGorvey does, nor as something sacrosanct, like her female acquaintances do, nor as something mesmerising, in a manner akin to Richard. Rather, she communicates that, for her, his masturbation is little more than an inane, self-indulgent habit; a habit which she, moreover, holds in contempt primarily because, by preoccupying her husband, it delays her evening walk.

The use of tragedy in Field's *Little Children*

Sarah's parodying of the *mores* of disciplinary/bio-power in the above mentioned ways rapidly matures into full-blown resistance to its imperatives. Such resistance assumes the form of her involvement with Brad Adamson (Patrick Wilson), which quickly develops from a seemingly innocuous kiss in the park into a sexual affair. What is tragic about her resistance, though, is that it is predicated upon her adorning her body and displaying it discreetly to optimum effect, in a manner indissociable from the disciplinary/bio-power myth of the body as a repository of sexual truth. Furthermore, her resistance is also couched solidly in the idea of sex as an avenue of freedom – indeed, the most intense form of self-assertion – such that it inadvertently falls squarely into the discursive trap of the deployment of sexuality, which has “us believe that our ‘liberation’ is in the balance” (Foucault 1998: 159) with every sexual act. This is, of course, not to say that her value as a critical character within the narrative should be dismissed out of hand. Rather, in the absence of a genealogically orientated discourse analysis of her circumstances, the avenue of ‘sex-as-resistance’ remained one of the very few options open to her. In fact, Foucault himself comments on the way in which the effects of disciplinary/bio-power on subjectivity almost predetermine the arising of an equal and opposite response, such as that which she exhibits. That is, Foucault explains that

once power produces...effect[s], there inevitably emerge the responding claims and affirmations, those of one's own body against power, of health against the economic system, of pleasure against the moral norms of sexuality, marriage, decency. Suddenly, what had made power strong becomes used to attack it. Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counter-attack in that same body. (Foucault 1975: 56)

In many ways, Sarah's resistance to her circumstances is mirrored in Brad's antagonism to his personal situation. That is, Brad can, similarly, be understood as retaliating against the expectations foisted on him in terms of the ideal of the bourgeois husband and father – firstly, insofar as he remains unemployed while his wife Kathy (Jennifer Connelly) is the wage earner, and secondly, insofar as he is educated and quite capable of becoming a lawyer, yet remains uninterested in studying for his final bar exam. Arguably, it is Sarah's comparable divergence from the status quo that attracts Brad to her; a divergence evinced by both her sanctioning of his choice to be the primary caregiver of his child, and her endorsing of his hesitance in relation to his studies, on the basis of the possibility that a career in law is simply not where his heart lies. As already discussed, their attraction is mutual, since Sarah sees Brad's oppositional tendencies as evidence of his kindred spirit of resistance to the oppressive norms of disciplinary/bio-power, and an affair ensues. Arguably, this affair entirely corroborates Foucault's assertion that “sexuality, through...becoming an object of analysis and concern, surveillance and control, engenders at the same time an intensification of each individual's desire, for, in and over his body,” and that “the revolt of the sexual body is the reverse of this encroachment” (Foucault 1975: 57).

However, notwithstanding the initial success of their above revolt, it is important to remember that, as Foucault also points out, “the impression that power weakens and vacillates... is in fact mistaken[, since]...power can retreat[,...]...re-organise its forces, [and] invest itself elsewhere” (Foucault 1975: 56). Accordingly, such reprisal on the part of disciplinary/bio-power, against Sarah and Brad's act of resistance, manifests itself in relation to two events within the narrative of Field's *Little Children* that ultimately end the two characters' affair. Although the two characters commit to running off together and decide to meet one another in the park late one evening to carry this out, their plans come to nought because of two incidents. Firstly, only hours before their intended escape, Brad has a serious skateboarding accident, and after a subsequent severe reprimand for his irresponsibility and childishness from a representative of disciplinary/bio-power society – in the form of a paramedic – a castigated Brad reneges on his deal with Sarah and returns home to reconcile with his wife. Secondly, while waiting for Brad in the park,

Sarah has her attention momentarily diverted by the unexpected presence of McGorvey, during which time her daughter disappears. At this point, despite her earlier parodying of her female acquaintances' fears concerning McGorvey, she too succumbs to all of the associated myths of disciplinary/bio-power, and panics because of his presence and the possible link between it and her daughter's absence. As such, although she soon finds her daughter a few paces down the street, she nevertheless also discards her plan of escape, and returns to the safety of her home and to her husband. In sum, despite their respective experiences of their various disciplinary/bio-power roles as unbearably suffocating, both Brad and Sarah also experience the (dangerous) freedom beyond the protective confines of such roles as *too* terrifying. Consequently, on the verge of escape, both lose heart and return to their respective spouses and homes. The narrative also terminates soon thereafter, without providing any indication of a renewed effort on their part to attain freedom, such that one is left to surmise that their mutual tragic failure in this regard is permanent.

Admittedly, from the above description of Field's *Little Children*, the film could conceivably be construed as a moral tale of sorts, rather than critical cinema, insofar as it ends with the unfaithful Brad and Sarah both conceding to the error of their ways, and returning penitently to their respective domestic roles. Yet, the figure of McGorvey problematises any such simplistic appraisal of the film. This is because, while Brad and Sarah went their separate ways, McGorvey – whom Sarah had erroneously viewed as a threat in the park – remained sitting on the swings, having brutally castrated himself in an effort to free himself of his unacceptable sexual desires. Indeed, the manner in which power 'reinstates' itself – and, most glaringly, how discursive "events are inscribed upon the body" (Lemert & Gillan 1982: 70) – is evinced through this additional tragedy that results from the discursive momentum of disciplinary/bio-power and its effects on subjectivity. The subsequent progression of the narrative is completely in accordance with this perspective, insofar as McGorvey emerges not as one who victimises others, but rather as a victim *of* discourse. This idea of disciplinary/bio-power discourses victimising individuals is clearly broached by the character of Sheila (Jane Adams), whom McGorvey dates at one point, and who is presented as the epitome of the 'hysterical woman' – another of the three negative anchorage points of the deployment of sexuality. In effect, her confusion and mounting neurosis emerge quite clearly as products *of* her psychiatric therapy, rather than as issues which have been addressed and remedied by such therapy. The implication of this, in turn, is that McGorvey's sexual predilections – for which he receives such censure – may also at least in part have been *produced* through similar discursive processes. In particular, these would include the disciplinary/bio-power processes that facilitated "the closure of the family and the endowment of its new space with a medical rationality[;]...an internal medicalization of the family and of the relationships between parents and children, but an external discursivity in the relationship with the doctor" (Foucault 2003a: 250-251). Ultimately, McGorvey becomes exasperated by his inability to rid himself of such (constructed) sexual predilections, and by the severe harassment he continues to receive from the community – both for his failure in this regard and owing to the stigma of his previous conviction. It is this exasperation which drives him to violently castrate himself, in an effort to comply with the behaviour expected of him. In doing so, McGorvey emerges as *the* tragic figure from which the film derives its name, insofar as it is both his infatuation with little children, and his desire to return to the (ostensible) sexual innocence of a little child, which bring him to this terrible end. Further, it can also be argued that a tragic parallel exists between McGorvey's act and Brad and Sarah's figurative castration by disciplinary/bio-power – insofar as they are robbed, by its dictates, of the requisite potency to make good their escape from its confines, and insofar as, through its processes of infantilization, they too are reduced to little children.⁸

The dissolving naivety of the disciplinary/bio-power subject

Yet, arguably, the most tragic aspect of Field's *Little Children* is that it is not simply a work of fiction, but rather a text that also neatly thematises extant socio-cultural dynamics – dynamics which lead both to the figurative castration of many individuals *and* to the literal castration of a few. That is, more tragic than the narrative of Field's film is the fact that the self-castrated figure of McGorvey reflected therein has real counterparts in contemporary American society. Further still, for these counterparts, their analogous self-mutilation is both sanctioned by the state, and held out as something that can only ever augment the possibility of their release from detention, rather than guarantee such release. Yet, some are so desperate to be released from a form of detention they find *more* oppressive than prison that they take even this drastic and irreversible step, by opting not for chemical, but rather for surgical, castration.

The eighth episode of Louis Theroux's documentary series *Law & Disorder* (2009) provides disturbing evidence of such a dynamic. In short, in this episode, entitled "A Place for Paedophiles," Theroux investigates the lives of detainees in Coalinga State Hospital. This is a multi-million dollar government-subsidised institution in California, which houses ex-sexual offenders *after* they have served out their prison sentences, and which seeks to facilitate their reintegration into the community. What the documentary reveals is not only the increasing bureaucratisation of the process of reintegration, to the point where it is possible for the reintegration of an ex-convict to be delayed for *longer* than his initial prison term. In addition, it also discloses the troubling manner in which, within the confines of Coalinga State Hospital, the discourses of disciplinary/bio-power reach an intensity and density seldom found within the greater disciplinary/bio-power society. This is conceivably because of the difficulty involved in contesting the legitimacy of these discourses, either formally or informally, within this domain. That is, although ex-convicts can formally reject the group and individual psychological therapy on offer at the institution, such rejection stands to weigh heavily against them in terms of the possibility of their release. Similarly, the informal failure, on the part of an ex-convict within group or individual therapy sessions, to explicitly and emphatically imbue disciplinary/bio-power discourses with the necessary credence and seriousness, is no less of an obstacle to release. As such, Coalinga State Hospital clearly emerges as a domain where both silence and laughter condemn equally. The consequence of the above is the production of a discursive situation in many ways akin to that which prevailed in the earliest eighteenth century mental asylum – established by William Tuke – where deranged inmates were obliged to "vie with each other in [terms of] politeness and propriety" (Foucault 1967: 201), in order to avoid harsh physical and verbal censure. That similar practices continue in a First World country, in the twenty-first century, is problematic not only because the inmates of Coalinga are officially no longer prisoners, but rather *ex-convicts* who have already paid their debt to society. In addition, the continuation of such practices is also rendered problematic in terms of human rights, insofar as these practices are imbricated with invasive techno-scientific apparatuses. These include sensors that, attached to an inmate's genitals, measure his slightest arousal in relation to audio-visual sexual stimuli (with the detection of such arousal militating against an inmate's release); along with both chemical castration and, beyond even that, surgical castration – which some inmates undergo in the hope that it will augment their chances of release from otherwise indefinite detention.

To be sure, some may construe the subjection of such inmates, firstly, to such invasive apparatuses and techniques; secondly, to the anguish of having their release dates endlessly deferred; and thirdly, to the intolerable monotony of having to embrace ever more stringent 'political correctness' in relation to disciplinary/bio-power discourses, as a particularly apposite form of poetic justice. After all, such inmates, analogously, violently invaded the personal

space of others, in a way that subjected them and their families both to endless imprisonment within the walls of psychological trauma, and to profound insecurity within disciplinary/bio-power society. However, while there is no doubt *some* truth to this perspective, it necessarily remains myopic if it does not take cognisance of two things: on the one hand, such inmates are themselves the victims of disciplinary/bio-power discourses, which informed their subjectivity around particular myths of sex. On the other hand, the victims of such inmates are subsequently victimised not by the inmates themselves (who are incarcerated), but rather by the same disciplinary/bio-power discourses – discourses which, at both implicit and explicit levels, characterise them as interminably ‘marked’ and damaged individuals.⁹ In either case, it should be remembered that it is only in terms of the discursive framework of disciplinary/bio-power that “the most discreet event in one’s sexual behavior – whether an accident or a deviation, a deficit or an excess – [is]...capable of entailing the most varied consequences throughout one’s existence” (Foucault 1998: 65). And, notably, this particular perspective does not constitute an ancient or perennial insight into the human condition, but is rather only a viewpoint less than a hundred and fifty years old.

It is, perhaps, in response to the growing understanding of disciplinary/bio-power as the *source* of the above problems, rather than as a means of addressing such problems, that films like Field’s *Little Children* are emerging, and corresponding instances of social discontent are occurring. Indeed, in many ways, the highly articulate critical stance toward disciplinary/bio-power, reflected in the narrative of this film, is echoed in the somewhat less eloquent (but no less critical) rejection, on the part of increasing numbers of inmates at Coalinga, of the legitimacy of disciplinary/bio-power to define them and determine their fate. This refusal, significantly, stems from their recognition that, *regardless* of the degree of their future complicity with disciplinary/bio-power discourses, they can hope for neither freedom nor forgiveness. The emergence of such critical perspectives is arguably of immense importance because, as Foucault points out, revolt *is* possible. That is, he explains that

the impulse by which a single individual, a group, a minority, or an entire people says, ‘I will no longer obey,’ and throws the risk of their life in the face of an authority they consider unjust [is]... something irreducible [because no authority is capable of making it utterly impossible...[T]hat is how subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of anyone) is brought into history, breathing life into it [-]...it is because there are such voices that the time of human beings does not have the form of evolution but that of ‘history,’ precisely (Foucault 1979: 449, 452).

Such resistance is moreover not something that should be feared, ignored or rebuked, because, as Bent Flyvbjerg points out in his article “Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?” such expression of critical discontent, and the ensuing emergence of conflict, are the very life-blood of democracy. Accordingly, although the consensus valorised by Jürgen Habermas constitutes a component of democracy, it by no means comprises the whole of democracy. Rather, for democracy to grow, such consensus must be interrupted by the dynamism of conflict, which derives from a reconsideration of history and the exploration of difficult related questions. In effect, it is only through the sympathetic address of the sources of such conflict, and via the associated subsequent inclusion of the marginalised who expressed their discontent, that democracy flourishes – by increasing the ambit of the consensus which informs it. Both Foucault’s works and his methodological approach constitute valuable catalysts in this process (Flyvbjerg 1998: 211-214, 221-229).

To sum up, the cinematic texts discussed above, through thematising such discursive battles as they manifest themselves in discordant social relations, underscore the legitimacy of, and provide a lucid illustration of, Foucault’s conception of power as something productive. Accordingly, because “power...traverses and produces things,...induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse[, it]...needs to be considered as a productive network which

runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression” (Foucault 1977c: 119). As such, perhaps on account of the increasing intensity of disciplinary/bio-power regimentation and normative prescriptions, what seems to have been inadvertently produced is an increasingly critical disciplinary/bio-power subject. In other words, a subject characterised less by docility and intellectual myopia before the tenets of disciplinary/bio-power, and more by either a tendency to tentatively question the legitimacy of its imperatives, or to blatantly reject such imperatives as morally bankrupt anachronisms. To be sure, against this emerging subjectivity, mainstream Hollywood cinema for the most part continues to perpetuate and propagate the more conservative socio-cultural *mores* of America, such that it comprises, as it were, the regular pulse of this gargantuan society. However, arguably, social scientists should be wary of too hastily discounting anomalies within its tempo as simply the variegated responses of a sleeping giant to the haunting simulacra of its dreams. This is because, albeit rarely, such a change in rhythm – in the form of a critical cinematic theme – can just as easily indicate a partial awakening from the slumber of tradition. Such an awakening, in turn, would oblige social scientists to stir themselves from their own dogmatic slumber, in order to theorise the subject anew.

Notes

1. As Wolfgang Sachs explains in *Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development*, in the wake of the Allied victory of 1945, Harry Truman, in his inaugural speech of 1949, hubristically charted the ‘way forward’ for *all* the peoples of the globe, by characterising development as an ubiquitous end to be pursued, and by evaluating all countries against the developmental benchmark set by America (Sachs 1999: 3). Subsequently, America’s politico-economic dominance ensured that this approach gained increasing credence. Under its growing auspices, expanding international communication networks – ideologically supported by texts such as Daniel Lerner’s *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) and Wilbur Schramm’s *Mass Media and National Development* (1964) – extended this dominance into the global socio-cultural realm. It was into this increasingly powerful discursive maelstrom that ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘developing’ countries were steadily drawn, and progressively encouraged to follow America as an exemplar.
2. *Little Children* (2006) is Todd Field’s follow-up to his first feature film, the acclaimed *In the Bedroom* (2001). The latter film thematises the psychological incarceration of adults within the discursive matrix of modern society, consisting of a cruel imbrication of implacable public laws and irresistible personal desires. Through its orientation in this regard, *In the Bedroom* in many ways adumbrates the more complex treatment of this discursive matrix in *Little Children*. Arguably, these two films follow the critical tradition of Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) – in which Todd Field acted – and are thematically linked with other recent critical Hollywood films, such as Robert Benton’s *The Human Stain* (2003), Clint Eastwood’s *Mystic River* (2003), and Vadim Perelman’s *House of Sand and Fog* (2003), which similarly explore the ironies and profound discontent plaguing modern society.
3. As James Miller indicates in *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, Foucault derived inspiration from the alternative sexual practices he encountered during the late 1970s in, among other places, San Francisco. Such practices, especially the theatrical components of sadomasochism, he believed, constitute a dramatic articulation of the negotiation of sexual identity – understood as something porous and protean, rather than as something integral and stable. In many ways, the three volumes of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* are orientated around an exploration of this issue (Miller 2000: 245-284).
4. This lecture series, which took place between the publication of Foucault’s text on ‘disciplinary power,’ namely *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and his first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, namely *The Will to Knowledge* (1976) – in which he broached and elaborated upon the issue of ‘bio-power’ – in many ways provides a succinct delineation of Foucault’s central perspectives in relation to both of the above mentioned works.
5. As Gary Gutting points out, in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Foucault never advanced his books as grand historical narratives. Rather, he utilised history in his work to critique what he felt to be problematic social issues in the present. As Gutting explains, “many of Foucault’s histories fall under the category he designated ‘history of the present’... His motive for embarking on a history is his judgment that certain current social circumstances – an institution, a discipline, a social practice – are ‘intolerable.’ His primary goal is not to understand the past but to... use an understanding of the past to understand something that is intolerable in the present... Whereas much traditional history tries to show that where we are is inevitable... Foucault’s histories aim to show the contingency – and hence surpassability – of what history has given us” (Gutting 2005: 10). As such, through his various

- works, Foucault does not attempt to provide explicit programs of social reform. Instead, his works are made available to encourage “a perpetual and pervasive discursive antagonism, in the form of critique, which functions widely and randomly across the discursive terrain, in accordance with guerilla tactics, so to speak, in the interest of repeatedly causing the closing hand of any restrictive discursive economy to open before it can form a fist” (Konik 2009: 162). For more on the value of Foucault’s articulation of the relationship between history and the social orientation of the present, see Flyvbjerg, B. 1998. “Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?” In *Brit. Jnl. of Sociology* (1998) 49/2: 210-233.
6. Foucault himself alerts us to this paradox, namely that, although it “is customary to say that bourgeois society repressed infantile sexuality to the point where it refused even to speak of it or acknowledge its existence[.]...you find that children’s sex is spoken of constantly and in every possible context[.]. Thus, ‘s]exuality’ is far more of a positive product of power than power was ever repression of sexuality” (Foucault 1977c: 120).
 7. In terms of the Greek *ars erotica*, the older man or *erastes* “was in a position of initiative – he was the suitor – and this gave him rights and obligations; he was expected to show his ardor, and to restrain it; he had gifts to make, services to render;...and all this entitled him to expect a just reward” (Foucault 1992: 196) from the younger man or *eromenos*. Notably, the services rendered to the *eromenos* by the *erastes* mainly involved teaching him rhetorical skills and introducing him to the political community – both of which were crucial to his advancement in status within the *polis*.
 8. Importantly, characterising Brad and Sarah as ‘little children’ should not be understood as an indictment of adults who privilege the welfare of others – such as their children and spouse – over pursuit of their personal interests. Such self-sacrifice can be an honourable undertaking. However, ‘little children’ is an apposite descriptor for these two characters insofar as they defer to disciplinary/bio-power discourses, in much the same way as little children defer to parental authority.
 9. The vicious circle, in terms of which victims of abuse are automatically profiled by police as potential future criminals, is very well documented. In this regard, see: <http://www.criminalprofiling.ch/introduction.html>; <http://www.lawyersweekly.ca/index.php?section=article&articleid=1107&rssid=4>; and <http://www.crimeandclues.com/index.php/behavioral-evidence/48-criminal-profiling/135-criminal-profiling-part-two>. Indeed, so well known is this dynamic that it, too, has become the theme of mainstream Hollywood films. A particularly good recent example of this is Eastwood’s *Mystic River* (2003), in which the character of Dave Boyle (Tim Robbins) – who was abused as a child – is automatically blamed for the murder of a girl, by both the police and his friends. His innocence notwithstanding, this prejudice against him ultimately costs him his life.

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Adrian Konik is a senior lecturer in the Department of Journalism, Media and Philosophy, School of Language, Media and Culture, at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa.

Inge Konik is a Master's graduate in Philosophy, and tutor of undergraduate Cultural Studies, in the Department of Journalism, Media and Philosophy, School of Language, Media and Culture, at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa.