The Mother War
Current Trends and Critical Discourses
26-27 June 2009

Keynote Speakers:
Professor Carol Bacchi (University of Adelaide)
Professor Andrea O’Reilly (York University, Canada)
Professor Jackie Scott (University of Cambridge)
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Rationale/Background
Can women/mothers have it all? Reports of changing attitudes towards working mothers have made headline news in the last few weeks following the publication of Jacqueline Scott et al's book on Women and Employment: Changing Lives, New Challenges (Edward Elgar, 2008). This is not the first time that working mothers have been in the firing line. In the last three decades there have been numerous reports about the impact of working mothers on child’s health, psychological wellbeing, educational success, and socialisation. It seems that either working mothers are the root cause of all social ills or have become the scapegoat for failings for national social and welfare policies.

This workshop will explore current trends in scholarly debates on gender and the social construction of mothering. In order to unpack the complex set of interactions that define popular views of mothers and mothering, the workshop proposes to bring together scholars from politics, sociology, psychology and policy studies. Developing a truly multidisciplinary research agenda, the participants will critically reflect the relationship between the theory and practice of mothering. This workshop will expand the reach of current research by bringing together scholars in politics and policy studies with health care practitioners. Moreover, it will look for ways to reconcile the increasing diversification of personal expectations and social practices on the one hand, with core assumptions about the role and function of women as mothers on the other.

Acknowledgements
The organisers would like to thank the Institute for Advanced Studies (University of Surrey) for sponsoring this event and giving us the opportunity to bring scholars of international standing at our institution to discuss such a topical and important issue. Particular thanks go to Mirela Dumic for all her help in bringing together the event.

(Roberta Guerrina, Helen Allan, Lynne Millward-Purvis)
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Programme

26 June 2009
9:15-9:45 Registration/Coffee
9:45-10.00 Welcome & Opening Address
10:00-10.45 Plenary 1 – Prof. Carol Bacchi – Mothering and policy approaches (CEC 3)
10:45-11.00 Coffee
11:00-12.30 Parallel Panels 1
12.30-13.30 Lunch
13.30-15.00 Parallel Panels 2
15.00-16.15 Plenary Roundtable on Work-Life Balance - Dr. Millward-Purvis, Dr. James; Dr. C. Hakim (CEC 3)
16.15-16.30 Tea
16.30-18.00 Parallel Panels 3
18.00 Drinks reception

27 June 2009
9:30-10.00 Coffee
10.00-10.45 Plenary 2 – Prof. Jackie Scott “Gender Roles in the Family” (CEC 3)
10.45-11.00 Coffee
11:00-12.30 Parallel Panels 4
12.30-14.00 Lunch
14.00-14.45 Plenary 3 - Prof. Andrea O'Reilly “Theories of Mothering” (CEC 3)
14.45-15.00 End of Conference/Tea
RESEARCH PANELS

Parallel Panels 1 (Friday 26 June 2009, 11:00-12.30)

Panel 1.1  Mothering as performance (CEC 3)
Chair: Dr. Rachel Brook (University of Surrey)
1. Brown, Chris (Univ of Glasgow) ‘A lot of Mothers Become martyrs’: What Modern Mothers Think of Modern Motherhood’
2. Vincent, Carol (Univ of London) ‘Performing Mothering: Social Class, Mothers and Childcare’
3. Condry, Rachel (Univ of Surrey) ‘Making Mothers Accountable: Mothers of Offenders and Maternal Responsibility’

Panel 1.2  Representations and Social Constructions (CEC 2)
Chair: Dr. Lynne Millward-Purvis (University of Surrey)
1. Lowe, Pam; Yardley, Elizabeth (Aston University) and Lee, Ellie (University of Kent) ‘Pregnant and Pissed? Mothering and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome’
3. Ellis, Kyla (University of Brighton) ‘Choosing Teenage Motherhood? A challenge for contemporary constructions’

Parallel Panels 2 (Friday 26 June 2009, 13:30-15.00)

Panel 2.1  Parenting, policy and good mothering (CEC 2)
Discussant: Dr. Roberta Guerrina (University of Surrey)
1. Hunter, Caroline (University of York) ‘Mother Abuse: A matter of youth justice, child welfare or domestic violence?’
2. Mantovani, Nadia (St George’s University of London) ‘The voice of policy versus the voice of experience: Identity work, moral accountability and good mothering practices in narratives of black teenage mothers’

Panel 2.2  Social Work and ‘other mothers’ (CEC 3)
Chair: Dr. Tereza Capelos (University of Surrey)
1. Clarke, Harriet (University of Birmingham) ‘Risky Mother and others? Disability, Gender and parenting – Challenging Social Work?’
2. Ward, Nicki (University of Birmingham) ‘Beyond the Pale: Child Protection discourses and the production of inconceivable mothers’
3. Hearn, Tina and Surinder Guru (University of Birmingham) ‘Forced Motherhoods’

**Parallel Panels 3 (Friday, 26 June 2009, 16:30-18.00)**

**Panel 3.1 Femininity, Paid Work and Motherhood (CEC 3)**  
Chair: Dr. Dr. Roberta Guerrina (University of Surrey)  
1. Smith, Merryn (University of Bristol) “Desire and Defence: A psycho-social analysis of feminine ambition”  
3. Faircloth, Charlotte (University of Cambridge) ‘Those who are yet to make the mothering journey': Attachment parenting, full-term breastfeeding and identity work.

**Panel 3.2 Mothering, Mother blame and the Disabled Child (CEC 2)**  
Chair: Dr. Helen Allan (University of Surrey)  
1. Waite-Jones, Jenny (University of Leeds) ‘The ‘neurotic mother’: mothers’ experiences of caring for a chronically ill child’  
2. Rogers, Chrissie (Brunel University) ‘But it’s not all about the sex: mothering, normalization and learning disability’  
3. Ryan, Sara (Oxford University) ‘Did I wash strawberries when I was pregnant?’ mothers, blame and autism spectrum disorder’

**Parallel Panels 4 (Saturday, 27 June 2009, 11:00-12:30)**

**Panel 4.1 Maternal instinct, feeding and negotiating gender identities (CEC 3)**  
Chair: Dr. Helen Allan (University of Surrey)  
1. McFadden, Alison (University of York) ‘You have to keep your breast hidden: How women of Bangladeshi origin navigated breastfeeding and maintained modesty in the context of religious, ethnic and gender identities’  
2. Lee, Ellie (University of Kent) ‘Infant feeding and problems of policy’  
3. Davis, Kelly ‘The Love affair: ‘maternal instinct’ as biologically oriented or experientially accumulated?’
Panel 4.2  Public-Private Negotiations: paid work, the state and divisions of labour (CEC 2)
Chair: Dr. Roberta Guerrina (University of Surrey)
1. Speight, Svetlana (National Centre for Social Research) ‘Childcare Arrangements used by families with pre-school children’
2. McKay, Joanna (Nottingham Trent University) ‘Having it all? Women MPs and Motherhood in Germany and the UK’
3. Ahn, Jong-Soon (University of Sussex) ‘A different Approach to understanding Korean Mothers: Labour force participation and class difference’
4. Skinner, Tina and Hyun-Joo Lim (University of Bath) ‘Culture, Motherhood and Employment: Findings from a Pilot Qualitative Study of East Asian Working Mothers in Britain’

Posters
Lee-Wilson, Pia (University of East London) ‘Social Construction of Motherhood vis-à-vis child neglect’
ABSTRACTS

Panel 1.1  Mothering as performance

Brown, Chris (Univ of Glasgow) ‘A lot of Mothers Become martyrs”: What Modern Mothers Think of Modern Motherhood’

This paper draws on in-depth interviews with eighteen mothers in low-income working families. The interviews focussed on the role of mothers as family money managers, the balance between home and work, and the reality and ideology of ‘doing gender’ for modern mums.

All the mothers interviewed expressed a strong affinity to paid work, both for financial reasons and as a key element of their self-esteem and identity; the notion of the male breadwinner seems dead. Strong ideas of equality in both decision making and spending were also universally expressed. However, closer investigation revealed that in half of the families the mother had significantly less spending power than the father and children. Moreover, almost all of the women were the family money managers, daily facing difficult choices about spending and considerable related stress. The mothers also expressed ambiguity in their image of motherhood, seeking equality in parenting but often sacrificing their own needs in favour of those of their husband and children. These contrasts between ideological beliefs and the reality of home life reveal many of the difficulties and tensions of mothering today. Although much has changed for the better, it seems that self-sacrifice, anxiety and guilt very often remain central to the experience of modern motherhood.

Vincent, Carol (Univ of London) ‘Performing Mothering: Social Class, Mothers and Childcare’

This paper draws on data from two recently completed and ESRC-funded projects which investigated how parents from different class backgrounds, choose childcare for their young children. The data is drawn from qualitative interviews with 56 professional middle class parents (mainly mothers) and 70 working class parents (again mainly mothers), all of whom live in two socially mixed localities in London. Against a background of increased attention being given to mothering roles and responsibilities by policy makers and by the media, this paper aims to indicate the outlines and the contours of normative mothering in affluent western countries, such as the USA and the UK, at the beginning of the twenty first century. I will discuss the discursive power of Intensive Mothering Expectations (Johnston & Swanson 2006, Hays 2003), and the way in which this particular set of practices and outlook has become universalised as standard. I argue, that far from being a shared experience common to all women with children, mothering practices, including consumer behaviour, are strongly infused by class. I finish with a portrayal of a small number of women from different class backgrounds, who live close together in London, but have strongly divergent understandings and experiences of mothering.
Condry, Rachel (Univ of Surrey) ‘Making Mothers Accountable: Mothers of Offenders and Maternal Responsibility’

This paper explores the ways in which mothers of offenders are held morally and legally accountable for the actions of their children. It draws on research on the relatives of adult offenders convicted of serious crimes such as murder, rape and child sex offences (Condry 2007), and on parents and parenting work in the youth justice system. The first study included long, searching interviews with seventeen mothers of serious offenders. They were found to be profoundly affected by the heinous character of the crime and the penalties subsequently imposed and were stigmatised, blamed and shamed in very particular ways. The second study explored the processes and ideas underlying parenting work in youth justice. There is an increasing emphasis in Government policy on ‘problem families’ and how their difficulties can be addressed in order to reduce offending. In reality, however, it is often mothers who are held to be responsible and mothers who are the recipients of parenting ‘support’ and parenting orders. The paper explores some of the implications of these developments and suggests that responses to mothers of ‘deviant’ offspring can tell us much about the social construction of the role of ‘mother’ and the responsibilities of motherhood.

Panel 1.2  Representations and Social Constructions

Lowe, Pam; Yardley, Elizabeth (Aston University) and Lee, Ellie (University of Kent) ‘Pregnant and Pissed? Mothering and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome’

Today, alongside many other proscriptions, women are expected to abstain or at least limit their alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Indeed, Drinking and Pregnancy (Dept of Health 2008) suggests that abstinence should begin prior to conception and continue through breastfeeding into mothering in general. This advice is reinforced through mandatory warning labels on bottles and cans of alcoholic drinks. In most (but not all) official policies, this is linked to a risk of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome or one of its associated syndromes. However, given that there is little medical evidence that low levels of alcohol consumption have an adverse impact on the foetus, we need to examine broader societal ideas to explain this. Drawing from coverage from UK newspapers, this paper will argue that contemporary concerns and resistance to these ideas about mothering and drinking can be linked to ideas about women’s role in society. Finally it will consider how extending the ideal of ‘good mothering’ into both pre and post-conception periods, has implications for the policing of all women’s behaviour.

Gillies, Val (London South Bank Univ) 'Holding Parents to Account: Anti-Social Behaviour and the Politics of Mother Blaming’

Parenting is a central theme in a proclaimed war against anti-social behaviour, with the Government alleging that many parents are failing to teach ‘positive values and decent behaviour’. A conviction that social disorder must be tackled at the level of the family has led to increasingly intrusive and authoritarian approach to family policy - unparalleled in recent history. Gender neutral language conceals the fact that it is
predominantly mothers who face sanctions in relation to the behaviour of their sons. This paper examines classed, gendered and ethnic specific assumptions underpinning such campaigns to re-instill ‘respect’. These assumptions are contrasted with the lived experience of mothers of ‘at risk’ youth. Drawing on data from an ethnographic study of pupils with challenging behaviour the paper highlights the everyday struggles characterising mothers’ accounts. Case study analysis will demonstrate the complex, multi-layered structural factors underpinning mothers’ experiences and will reveal the resourcefulness and commitment generated in response. In conclusion it will be argued that contemporary policy and legislation is driven by a rigid moral agenda that overlooks the hard work, dedication and expertise displayed by the mothers in this research.

Ellis, Kyla (University of Brighton) ‘Choosing Teenage Motherhood? A challenge for contemporary constructions’
The recent furore over several sensationalist stories regarding a young father in Sussex as well as the release of the UK’s teenage pregnancy rates have once more highlighted the negative construction of teenage mothers. The construction of teenage motherhood as a social problem is, however, a relatively recent phenomenon. Prior to the 1980’s the moralising and regulating of parenthood was more apparent with regards to illegitimacy and lone parenthood. This paper begins with a brief examination of the shift in these discourses which can be seen as key in the formation of current constructions.

The paper will then move on to discuss contemporary understandings which often depict young mothers as irresponsible and yet calculating. The implications of stigma, and arguably misplaced policy initiatives, which result from these interpretations, can have serious consequences for the lives of young parents and their children. For this reason, a critically different picture of young mothers and their routes to parenthood needs exploring.

This paper draws on doctoral research which focuses on ‘decisions’ made in becoming a young parent. From this, new understandings can be formed which highlight the complexities behind young parents ‘choices’. These have the potential to challenge damaging perceptions of young mothers.

Panel 2.1 Parenting, policy and good mothering

Hunter, Caroline, Judy Nixon, Sadie Parr ‘Mother Abuse: A matter of youth justice, child welfare or domestic violence?’
The abuse of parents, but most particularly mothers, by their (most frequently teenage) children is one of the most under-researched forms of family violence. Our work in the youth justice sphere, in particular in relation to anti-social behaviour, indicates it to be prevalent amongst families where the women are often being blamed for the anti-social behaviour of those teenage children. Yet those women are expected to take responsibility for the behaviour outside the home of the very same children who are being violent towards them within the home.
This paper explores the limited evidence which is available on parent abuse from studies in the USA, Canada and Australasia. It examines the silence on the issue in the UK in the three policy realms of youth justice, child welfare and domestic violence. It explores how concepts of good mothering can lead to concealment and shame, but also a lack of response from service providers.

Mantovani, Nadia ‘The voice of policy versus the voice of experience: Identity work, moral accountability and good mothering practices in narratives of black teenage mothers’

In conjunction with the growing concerns regarding young women who become pregnant and proceed to motherhood in terms of their higher rate of disadvantage and poor educational achievement, alarm about the wide range of socio-economic and psychosocial difficulties suffered in their childhood has resulted in critical questions being asked about inter-generational transmission of poverty. Most of all the ability of young parents to be good parents has been questioned, with age standing as a proxy and defining category for single parenthood. This paper reports the findings of a PhD research study which focuses on the practical decisions and moral evaluations of a small sample of young, single, Black mothers who are ‘looked after’ by Local Authority, to uncover the range of practical and moral activities in which they engaged on their path to motherhood, and how - in a context dominated by framing teenage pregnancy as a problem which denies teen mothers their moral competency - how do young women produce their own moral selves. This paper unpacks how tacit and explicit constructions of teenaged motherhood as a social problem, affect their sense of self as mothers and explores the identity management and stigmatising position of this group of women. It uncovers the deviance disavowal and decision-making practices of these marginalised women which are more complex than the policy discourse and practices currently in place can recognise.

Panel 2.2 Social Work and ‘other mothers’

Clarke, Harriet (University of Birmingham) ‘Risky Mother and others? Disability, Gender and parenting – Challenging Social Work?'

Since the mid-1990s there have been significant developments in research focused on the experiences of disabled parents and their families with reference to the social contexts of people’s lives. This paper reviews the development of research knowledge and perspectives which have formed part of a challenge to the othering of disabled people as parents, and considers the extent to which gendered analyses have been and should be developed in order to inform social work policy and practice. The failure to acknowledge disabled people as providers of care, or the negation or problematisation of that care, is likely to be played out in different ways in relation to both men and women. This review seeks to unearth these differences, and consider specifically whether some disabled mothers’ experiences of social work and social care raises questions with relevance for other parents (mothers and fathers) whose parenting role is marginalised, under-supported or denied.
Ward, Nicki (University of Birmingham) ‘Beyond the Pale: Child Protection discourses and the production of inconceivable mothers’

Public debates surrounding issues of child protection, child abuse and desertion, often employ notions of both good and bad mothering. Within this context, hegemonic discourse implies that the children of good and adequate mothers are not victims of abuse whilst at the same time constructing women who step outside of the boundaries of good motherhood as obviously feckless, inadequate and devious.

Drawing on examples from the high profile ‘cases’ of Baby P, Shannon Matthews, Victoria Climbié and Madeleine McCann this paper will use a process of discourse analysis to explore media reports and discussions in order to examine the construction of good and bad mothers. It will illustrate the role which gendered, classed and racialised discourses play in the ‘othering’ of mothers.

The paper will raise questions about the contradictions between these discourses and social work principles and values and consider how these negative constructions may be challenged in practice.

Hearn, Tina and Surinder Guru (University of Birmingham) ‘Forced Motherhoods’

The dominant socio-political environment has witnessed a shift, from a mode of governance which emphasises multi-culturalism, to one which promotes both civic integration, and also constructs of alien and potentially dangerous communities, as evidenced in the debates around terrorism, ‘honour’ killings and forced marriage. Within this gendered and racialised environment, mothering identities are multiple, and often vilify mothers. For minority ethnic mothers, identities are also multiple, ranging from the potentially liberatory, to gendered and racialised discourses, which are oppressive, and can function to complement dominant discourses.

This paper explores how social work can form part of the dominant socio-political agenda, its intersections with potentially oppressive community based discourses, and the implications of this for mothering and mothers from minority ethnic groups. It goes on to examine those discourses which can offer mothers potentially affirming and liberatory possibilities, and explores roles that social work could play in this respect.
Panel 3.1  Femininity, Paid Work and Motherhood

**Smith, Merryn “Desire and Defence: A psycho-social analysis of feminine ambition”**

Three decades on from the radical social, cultural and political changes implemented by neo liberal governments throughout the west, this paper examines the psycho-social implications of how two professional Australian women experience their lives in the much promised ‘female future’ (Hughes and Kerfoot, 2002). Within this paper I present an analysis of narrative accounts gathered in unstructured interviews with two women who found themselves at the forefront of this shift. Like many other women of their generation who made the transition to womanhood during the upheaval of the late 1970’s and mid 1980’s, the women who share their stories here felt compelled to depart from their mother’s life script, ‘seize the day’ and re-make themselves as ‘new woman’ in the ‘new knowledge economy’. The paper aims to explore the meaning frameworks through which these women make sense of this ongoing transformation process as professional women, mothers and non-mothers; asking how are women’s subjectivities produced in and through the social spaces that have opened up for them in these historical conditions and cultural and social locations? I examine how the participants’ struggle to construct coherent narratives as ambitious career professionals and (non) mothers and discuss how each woman has ‘no way to own’ her professional ambition ‘except as [potential] loss’ (Harris, 1997, p. 298).


This paper will presents some of the findings of a qualitative study of younger and older mothers in the UK which analyses the way both groups present and practice moral selves in the context of dominant discourses of good motherhood. With the young mothers in my study being working class and the older mothers being middle-class, my research shows that mothers’ age identities are often concealed by or intertwined with their class identities and intersect to powerfully shape their presentations of the ‘good’ mother. One significant finding of this research which will be explored in this paper, is that that both younger and older mothers engage in practices of ‘othering’ to claim good motherhood. Mothers used comparisons with other mothers to construct themselves as better mothers, using class-based assumptions about faulty parenting. Not surprisingly, my participants’ respective class ‘others’ were markedly different: for older mothers distanced themselves from non-child-focused mothers; whereas for younger mothers disassociated themselves from unrespectable, dangerous mothers.

Dominant discourses of good motherhood have changed so that the (professional) working mother has to some extent become part of the epitome of good motherhood, with narrating ‘a project of the self’ beyond motherhood now increasingly a requirement for the development of a moral self for women in late modern societies. In this context, I will explore to what extent the mothers in my study also engaged in ‘othering’ practices on the basis of their working/stay at home mother identities and how this exacerbated existing class differences and created further fractions for mothers within the same social class and age group. The paper will conclude by
considering the moral and social function of comparisons which mothers routinely draw between one another and its usefulness for understanding the ‘mother war’.

Faircloth, Charlotte (University of Cambridge) ‘Those who are yet to make the mothering journey’: Attachment parenting, full-term breastfeeding and identity work.

This paper profiles research with ‘attachment mothers’ in London who practice a philosophy maintaining maternal-infant proximity over a long period of time (typically, breastfeeding to ‘full term’ and ‘on cue’, bed-sharing and ‘baby-wearing’). Full-term breastfeeding is a critical element of what I refer to as women’s ‘identity work’; the narrative processes of self-making mothers engage in as they go about raising their children. My argument is part of a broader observation that being a parent is no longer simply something one ‘is’; it is something one ‘does’. Mothering is an occupation in which women are expected to be emotionally absorbed and personally fulfilled.

Sociologists have noted that one of the enduring features of social groups are their ‘commitment mechanisms’, which typically involve choice. Only one mother in my sample was working full-time. Working for money was seen as important for ‘other mothers’– just not for mothers who had made the decision to be full-time carers to their children (which may entail living more simply). This was typically narrated as part of an enlightenment process, casting ‘other mothers’ as those who are either uniformed or ‘yet to make the mothering journey’. Women would talk about their mothering practices as ‘most natural’ – known internally in the form of instinct and validated externally though evolutionary studies and clinical research. This paper explores questions of social affinity and maternal identity, showing how for a small proportion of this sample, mothering ‘choices’ are a basis for enthusiastic ‘awareness raising’ which increasingly segregate women into competing mothering factions.

Panel 3.2  Mothering, Mother blame and the Disabled Child

Waite-Jones, Jenny ‘The ‘neurotic mother’: mothers’ experiences of caring for a chronically ill child’

That mothers are influenced by the social context in which they are placed emerged when exploring parents’ experience of having a child with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA). In comparison to mothers of well children, such mothers felt less able to promote their ill child’s social and emotional independence or meet the needs of other family members. Caring for a chronically ill child involved having to act as their advocate, protect yet encourage autonomy, contain yet avoid dependency, whilst often providing age-inappropriate care. Such care demanded a hyper-vigilance which was often misinterpreted as overprotection, particularly by professionals, such that mothers felt condemned as ‘neurotic.’ That no father reported feeling judged in this way suggests a pre-existing, socially constructed norm, intrinsic to the role of motherhood, against which individual mothering in judged. These findings imply a need for healthcare professionals, and others responsible for the well being of mothers
and children, to be more informed about the socially constructed position of motherhood. This paper adopts a social constructionist approach in order to explain the impact of social and cultural processes on the experiences of mothers of chronically ill children.

Rogers, Chrissie ‘But it’s not all about the sex: mothering, normalization and learning disability’

This paper is about mothering, young learning disabled people, their sexual and relationship lives and normalisation. Not through the lens of the disabled person, but via a mothers perspective. As a mother who has a learning disabled daughter, a feminist and an academic, my own mothering experience, my PhD research and social theory are weaved throughout with a view to open up debate about sex, intimacy, normalisation and how this impacts upon the social psyche. I suggest that the relationship between sex, reproduction, intimacy and intellectual impairment and a project to decipher what it means to be human, in all its dirty glory are also part of the discourse that need to be discussed experientially and theoretically. So much so that the messy world within which we all live can be variously and differently constructed.

Ryan, Sara ‘Did I wash strawberries when I was pregnant?’ mothers, blame and autism spectrum disorder’

This paper explores the experiences of mothers of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. Using data from the DIPEx study of parents of children with autism, the analysis focuses on the ways in which 45 mothers of children aged between 3 and 57 discuss their experiences of blame. This focus highlights the complexity of blame - the different and shifting dimensions of blame – and uses blame as a lens for looking at the social construction of disability and mothering.

Panel 4.1 Maternal instinct, feeding and negotiating gender identities

McFadden, Alison (University of York) ‘You have to keep you breast hidden: How women of Bangladeshi origin navigated breastfeeding and maintained modesty in the context of religious, ethnic and gender identities’

This paper will explore how women’s identities as mothers and members of a socio-economically disadvantaged minority group shaped and were shaped by their breastfeeding experiences. The paper is based on a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with 23 women of Bangladeshi origin living in the North of England. The sample was diverse in terms of socio-economic status, education, migration history and language. Women held positive attitudes towards breastfeeding because of the health benefits, because it is ‘natural’ and because it is ‘Islamic’. However, a significant barrier to women realising their breastfeeding goals was navigating cultural attitudes towards the female body. While diverse attitudes towards breastfeeding in front of others were evident, all sought to maintain their modesty.
both within and outside the home and all talked of the ‘embarrassment’ and ‘shyness’ surrounding breastfeeding. While these are common themes in breastfeeding literature concerning all women, the participants in this study highlighted additional pressures based on religion and ethnicity. The intersection between identity and breastfeeding experiences will be further illustrated through how the respondents compared their experiences with those of the white majority population in the UK and with breastfeeding in Bangladesh.

Lee, Ellie (University of Kent) ‘Infant feeding and problems of policy’

How a mother feeds her baby is, formally, a decision for her to make. Yet infant feeding is surrounded by conventions and precepts about appropriate maternal decisions. British women feed their babies in a policy context where no ambivalence is associated with attaching breastfeeding to only important benefits for individual children, mothers, and the wider society. Social scientific research indicates that the presumptions of policy are to some extent widely shared; assessments of mothers’ attitudes to infant feeding show they mostly agree ‘breast is best’. Yet practice departs greatly from official advice. One interpretation of this difference is that mothers are more ambivalent about the benefits of breastfeeding in practice, than in the abstract. Research utilising social scientific methods has largely not concerned itself with exploring maternal ambiguity and ambivalence as the paradigm informing most studies is a public health perspective. A small number of studies have, however, utilised social science methods to generate important insights about the tensions between policy and maternal practice. This paper summarises findings of this work indicating three major themes: breastfeeding promotion and the individualisation of social problems; ‘scientisation’ and the effacing of maternal choice; and moralisation and the problem of moral jeopardy. It concludes by indicating future possibilities for socio-cultural research about infant feeding.

Davis, Kelly ‘The Love affair: ‘maternal instinct’ as biologically oriented or experientially accumulated?’

One of the foundational elements in the social construction of mothering is the conflation of the fact of women’s biological reproduction and the framing of women as the natural caretakers of children. Embedded in notions of mothering as something women can do ‘naturally’ is the concept of ‘maternal instinct’; this concept involves expectations of a mother’s instant love and her innate knowledge of her children. In order to further the debate about how women understand and embody motherhood, ‘maternal instinct’ must be explored in relation to how it is conceptualised by mothers themselves. This paper examines women’s views and opinions relating to maternal instinct, and is drawn from my wider doctoral research that explored post-war changes in how kinship and expert advice affect the process by which women learn to mother among predominantly middle-class women living in Scotland. Using the narratives of the mother-daughter pairs I interviewed, the latter also being mothers, I address ‘maternal instinct’ and its meanings. I first explore changing views through the cohort divisions used in my research – based on the year in which the women’s children were born – followed by a discussion that cuts across the time periods to reveal a two-fold perception of ‘maternal instinct’.
Panel 4.2  Public-Private Negotiations: paid work, the state and divisions of labour

Speight, Svetlana (National Centre for Social Research) ‘Childcare Arrangements used by families with pre-school children’
TBC

McKay, Joanna ‘Having it all? Women MPs and Motherhood in Germany and the UK’

The recent increase in numbers of women becoming MPs in many European countries suggests that it is easier for women to enter politics nowadays than used to be the case (though still not as easy as for men). However, this doesn’t mean it’s a level playing field once they get there. Women still have to contend with prejudice and discrimination, antiquated practices, an alien culture, and a routine and timetable far more suited to male lifestyles. The latter factors are particularly challenging for female politicians with family responsibilities. Indeed, as long ago as 1991, Eva Kolinsky noted that the focus on women’s quotas had ‘underscored the organisational and overshadowed the socio-environmental preconditions for political participation’ by women.

This paper focuses on the additional challenges faced by women who combine a political career with motherhood. A big question it seeks to answer is whether or not it is easier for women to break through the political ‘glass ceiling’ and compete with men so long as they can act like men, for example staying late, working weekends, networking.

The paper examines the experiences of women MPs in two countries, namely the UK and Germany, looking at both the national and sub-national levels. It draws on information collected from female parliamentarians via face-to-face interviews and written questionnaires. The evidence suggests that although there are a few exceptional cases, generally it is easier to break through the ‘glass ceiling’ and rise through the ranks in politics for those who can fit into the existing party and parliamentary culture which has largely been determined by men. Thus most female MPs with family responsibilities face additional problems on top of those faced by women generally in a male dominated political environment. This suggests that measures such as quotas are not sufficient for full gender equality to be achieved in the political sphere – the ‘socio-environmental factors’ such as the culture and routine of politics would also need to change to achieve this. However, since parliaments do not operate in a vacuum more progressive social attitudes regarding working mothers in general may be required before female politicians can ‘have it all’ like their male counterparts.
Ahn, Jong-Soon ‘A different Approach to understanding Korean Mothers: Labour force participation and class difference’

In many developed countries, along with women’s higher expectations and greater involvement in employment and the erosion of the conventional gender division of labour, gender relations on occupational structure are changing as well as the nature of class experience.

Korean literature have indicated that Korea has shown a clear M-shape participation amongst women, which has disappeared in most Western societies and that conventional gender division of labour and marital division of labour are distinctive. It implies that the gender norms imprinted in the workplace and home and the nature of class experience of mothering are more or less different (at least, in the extent) from the ones of Western developed countries, due to the peculiar cultural and institutional characteristics. It seems peculiar in Korea that the gender and class dynamics are highly associated with age and education factors; indeed, societal discrimination seems to rise from the interaction of gender, class, education and age factors. In turn, this is reflected in the labour market sex discrimination; indeed, Korean business organizations have been long based on seniority-based promotion and management system and Conglomerates, Korean business groups sustain meritocracy by creating a white-collar employee culture with long work hour followed by long evenings of work-related socializing, while most mothers are discouraged to return to work by the long work-hour culture. Furthermore, literature has indicated that the experience of mothering is polarized in the occupational classes, particularly, due to different accessibility and affordability in childcare between upper class and working class. Many argue that it is attributable to the gender regime. Therefore, in understanding why Korean mothers’ labour force participation shows a clearer M-shape, a different approach taking into account of these cultural and institutional variants seems necessary.

Skinner, Tina and Hyun-Joo Lim ‘Culture, Motherhood and Employment: Findings from a Pilot Qualitative Study of East Asian Working Mothers in Britain’

While there is a plethora of literature on women’s experiences of motherhood and work, few studies have been conducted regarding the experiences of ethnic minority women living in the UK, particularly those of East Asian origin. The purpose of this study was to explore the narratives of East Asian working mothers and how they construct and reconstruct their identity. This study, based on in-depth interview data collected from 12 first-generation East Asian working mothers living in the UK, demonstrated that their ethnic identity as East Asians played a significant part in defining who they were. East Asian mothers shared a discernible trace of Confucianism, including a strong emphasis on education; an understanding of a child as their mother’s possession; and having children as human nature rather than individual choice. In addition, whilst there were similarities in the experience of combining motherhood and work between East Asian mothers and their white counterparts, the difficulty of the former appears to be compounded by their ethnic minority status. In particular, deskilling was a commonly occurring discourse among the participants, with a substantial number of the respondents taking a job that required lower qualifications than they had gained.
CONFERENCE DINNER

The conference dinner will be held on Friday evening at **KINGHAMS RESTAURANT** in Shere. Travel to and from the Restaurant will be by bus, which will leave the Stag Hill Campus at **19.15**. Pick up and drop off point: **Senate House bus stop**.

The Kinghams Restaurant offers classic, imaginative cuisine in a 17th century setting. The restaurant was opened in 1993 by Chef Proprietor Paul Baker and now features in all major guides.

Shere is a delightful and picturesque village few miles outside Guildford. Located between the Downs and the Surrey Hills it is a great place to spend a Saturday afternoon. The small stream and the duck pond offer endless entertainment for young children. A lovely 16th century pub located on the village green provides much needed refreshments on hot summer days.