

Pregnancy and pregnancy planning in the new parenting culture

A two-day seminar organised by Parenting Culture Studies and the Kent Centre for Law Gender and Sexuality and supported by the ESRC and bpas

**Tuesday 22nd and Wednesday 23rd June 2010
University of Kent, Canterbury**

The intellectual backdrop for this event is a body of scholarship concerned with the content and effects of contemporary parenting culture.

This work shows how child-rearing is mediated through a cultural narrative that provides mothers and, increasingly, fathers with rules – sometimes ambiguous – about how to realise their roles as parents. It shows how child-rearing has intensified, expanding to encompass a range of activities that were not previously seen as an obligatory dimension of this task. It has also indicated how the expansion of the child-rearing role has encouraged the belief that ‘parenting’ is a problematic sphere of social life, requiring much attention from policy makers.

The agenda for this seminar is grounded in the important observation that the imperatives of this parenting culture have begun to extend backwards: ideas about motherhood (and fatherhood) and the responsibilities entailed have begun to influence concerns about, and practices surrounding, the time before a child is born. Pregnancy and even pre-pregnancy have become sites for ‘parent-training’.

Our discussion will, in this light, aim to further develop the study of parenting culture by making pregnancy and pregnancy planning the focus of analysis. Over two days, international scholars from a range of disciplines will discuss and evaluate with an academic, professional and lay audience the ways in which such extension of ‘parenting’ backwards is becoming apparent, for example in the official and unofficial advice given to mothers and, increasingly, fathers about the health risks they should consider when planning a pregnancy and after conception; in the ways regulations about reproductive medicine reflect not only medical innovation but also new ideas about parenting and parenthood; in innovations in reproductive health policy and in the decisions made by women about childbearing and abortion.

Organiser: Jan Macvarish, Research Associate, Centre for Health Service Studies, University of Kent j.macvarish@kent.ac.uk

To book a place: email Sarah Slowe s.e.slowe@kent.ac.uk

Programme

Day 1. Tuesday, 22 June 2010

10-10.30 **Coffee/registration**

10.30-11 **Welcome and introduction to the event**

Ellie Lee, co-ordinator Parenting Culture Studies

11-1pm **Session 1: Extending parenting backwards? Pregnancy and pre-pregnancy in contemporary context**

Chair: Jan Macvarish, Research Associate, CHSS, University of Kent

Elizabeth Mitchell Armstrong, Associate Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, Princeton University, *'Do happier pregnancies make healthier babies? Stress and the medicalization of maternal emotion'*

Cynthia Daniels, Professor of Political Science, Rutgers University, *'Policing pregnancy: The politics of fetal risks'*

Discussants: Frank Furedi, Professor of Sociology University of Kent and Janet Golden, Professor of History, Rutgers University

1-2.30 **Lunch**

2.30-4 **Session 2: Fatherhood and parenting culture**

Chair: Sally Sheldon, Professor of Law, University of Kent

Tina Miller, Reader in Sociology, Oxford Brookes University, *'Men and 'bonding': fathers' expectations in the antenatal period'*

Jonathan Ives, Lecturer in Behavioural Science and Heather Draper, Reader in Biomedical Ethics, Centre for Biomedical Ethics, The University of Birmingham, *'Should we strive to involve men in a meaningful way during pregnancy? Rethinking men's involvement in antenatal care'*

4-4.30 **Coffee**

4.30-6.15 **Session 3: What's wrong with advocating alcohol abstinence to pregnant women? Perspectives from the US and Britain**

Chair: Andy Alaszewski, editor *Health, Risk and Society*

Janet Golden, Professor of History, Rutgers University

Pam Lowe, Lecturer in Sociology, Aston University.

Discussants: Elizabeth Mitchell Armstrong, Associate Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, Princeton University and Pat O'Brien, Consultant & Honorary Senior Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology University College Hospital London and spokesperson, RCOG

6.30 Drinks, followed by dinner.

Day 2: Wednesday, 23 June 2010

8.45-9.15 Coffee

9.15-11.15 Session 4: Motherhood, abortion and parenting culture

Chair: Ann Furedi, CEO bpas

Rachel Jones, Senior Research Associate, Guttmacher Institute, New York, *'Abortion decision making in a culture of 'intensive motherhood''*

Danielle Bessett, Ph.D., Charlotte Ellertson Social Science Postdoctoral Fellow, Ibis Reproductive Health, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A., *'Pregnancy after Abortion: women's experiences of a stigmatized reproductive career'*

Evelyn Mahon, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin, *'Is there ever a good time to have a child?'*

11.15-11.45 Coffee

11.45-1.15 Session 5: Abortion and the politics of motherhood

Chair: Ann Furedi, CEO bpas

Professor Kristin Luker, Elizabeth Josselyn Boalt Professor of Law and Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, *'Abortion and the politics of motherhood revisited'*

Discussant: Ruth Fletcher, Senior Lecturer in Law, Keele University

1.15-2.30 Lunch

2.30-4.30 Session 6: Reproductive technology in an age of intensive parenthood

Chair: Emily Jackson, Professor of Law, LSE
Martin Richards, Emeritus Professor of Family Research, Cambridge University, *'Present practice and future developments in the culture of choice'*

Julie McCandless, lecturer in law, Oxford Brookes University, *'What is 'supportive parenting'? The new 'Welfare of the Child' clause in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (2008)'*

Discussants: TBC

4.30 End