

Gender

Session organiser: Dr. Sylvie Dubuc, University of Oxford

Unequal entry to motherhood and unequal child outcomes: Evidence from the UK Millenium Cohort.

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The timing of motherhood in the UK has become increasingly socially polarised over time. Early motherhood often occurs among those who have been raised in disadvantaged circumstances whilst later motherhood is associated with having had better upbringings and having taken advantage of the education system. This paper considers the potential impact on her children of the divergence in the family life marked by the age at which a woman becomes a mother for the first time. Using the UK Millennium Cohort Study, we present evidence on the impact of the timing of a mothers' first birth on cognitive and behavioural outcomes of the cohort child. These outcomes are measured in the third sweep of the MCS when the cohort members are five years old. We control for some of the life course experience of the cohort child's mother, and then also circumstances in the child's first year. We demonstrate that much of the difference observed between the cognitive and behavioural outcomes of the children of young and older mothers is the consequence of either their mothers's disadvantaged social origins, or disadvantages apparent at the time of the first survey, which may also have had earlier origins. There is only a small degree of developmental penalty left to be attributed to the mother's age per se.

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Work-family balance: How much choice do mothers have?

Anne Kazimirski, National Centre for Social Research

How much choice do mothers have in balancing work and children? What impact have developments in maternity/ paternity leave, childcare and flexible working policy had on women and men's lives? What impact does using childcare have on parents and children, and how well informed are parents about childcare? This paper will address these questions using data from recent surveys carried out by the National Centre for Social Research on mothers' employment patterns, take up of maternity leave and flexible working, use of childcare and attitudes to employment. Mothers who have access to family-friendly arrangements and who have received maternity pay are more likely to go back to work. On the other hand, lone mothers, those with no qualifications, or those with a disabled person in the family are less likely to return to work. Access to affordable, quality, childcare, remains an issue for many parents, especially lone mothers. Recent evidence on the impact of childcare on two year olds' outcomes will also be reviewed, with the importance of quality highlighted as key to good cognitive and behavioural outcomes.

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Caste, Gender, Poverty In A Changing Hill Economy: Implications For Dalit Women's Health.

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Spanning a period of over a hundred and fifty years of imperialist and post colonial rule, hill society of the Pauri Garhwal of the Central Himalayan region saw the implementation of state economic policies that spelt a virtual destruction of the old subsistence-based agricultural economy. The crippling impact this had on local life compelled large levels of male out- migration to near and distant towns and cities. Women largely stayed behind and bore the brunt of farming degraded lands and other activities which intensified their already heavy economic role. For the Dalits (scheduled caste) of the region who worked both in artisan and agricultural production, the social release from caste -based client- patron relationships brought about by the economic breakdown, also meant, in the absence of slimmer possibilities of out- migration, the dire need to diversify work patterns. While they sought new livelihoods in farming, animal husbandry and petty trade, both men and women predominantly ended up as wage labour on upper caste farms, the new work relations not unconditioned by old caste practices. Dalit women additionally engaged in domestic labour, their own and also that of upper castes as also subsistence work which was essential to survival. They are visibly the worst victims of wider economic and social processes. Based on ethnographic research done in two villages of Garhwal district, Uttarakhand, India, this paper examines the relationship between work, poverty and health in the lives of Dalit women. Situating the problem within the framework of feminist political economy, the paper explores how Dalit women's lives are shaped by the articulation of caste, class and patriarchy based labour patterns and reproductive ideologies. It examines women's perceptions and experience of their general, reproductive, mental and emotional health and the nature of their access to health services. To bring the situation of Dalit women in sharp focus, the paper attempts a differential analysis of Dalit women's health situation as distinct from that of upper caste women. We also make an effort to capture nuanced differences within the Dalits themselves.

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