BEYOND MOTHERING MYTHS?
Motherhood in an Age of Neoliberalism and Individualisation

9th International Conference on Motherhood

The University of Sydney
Camperdown, NSW
10th – 12th July, 2019

Supported by:
The Australian Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (AMIRCI)
The University of Sydney
The Australian Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (AMIRCI)

AMIRCI is a non-profit organisation interested in promoting research into mothering, motherhood, motherwork and related areas, including maternal subjectivities and identities, cultural representations, and differences.

This valuable field of research seeks to raise critical awareness of the particularities and complexities of mothering embedded in Australian society. Our membership is predominantly composed of scholars but we welcome writers, artists, activists, professionals, groups, agencies, policy makers, educators and anyone interested in promoting feminist mothering.

We are committed to the inclusion of all mothers, those people who are mothering, and those people interested in mothers/mothering. We recognise that the experience of being a mother varies through dislocation, discrimination, culture and context.

About Us

At the conclusion of the successful conference *Theorizing and Representing Maternal Subjectivities* held at the University of Queensland, Brisbane in October 2005, it was decided that an Association for Research on Motherhood/Mothers/Motherwork be established in Australia (ARM-A). This name was chosen to reflect our alignment with the then Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) run by Prof O’Reilly. Our name change to AMIRCI in 2010 reflected the name change of ARM to the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI). As of June 1, 2019, MIRCI has now become the International Association of Maternal Action and Scholarship (IAMAS) run by Dr Katie B. Garner.

Dr. Marie Porter, who has been researching motherhood/mothering for many years, was, and remains, the driving force behind the establishment, and continuation of our Australian organisation. At that time, it was proposed that the association be a national one, and be used as a vehicle for future growth. The organisation has prospered due to the voluntary dedication of a small group. As life has changed for many of the founding members of the committee, the need for new members is critical. If you want to see this focus on the maternal to continue, please consider nominating for the committee.

“We do not think of the power stolen from us and the power withheld from us in the name of the institution of motherhood.”

*Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution.*
Adrienne Rich, 1976

“In the three-plus decades since the publication of Rich’s ovarian work, the empowerment of mothers has been a central, if not defining, concern of maternal activism and scholarship.”

*Twenty-First Century Motherhood: Experience, Identity, Policy, Agency*
Andrea O’Reilly, 2010
Past Conferences

2017  
*A Feminism for Mothers* [Symposium]  
Australian Catholic University, Melbourne  
Monday 27th November, 2017

2016  
*Negotiating Competing Demands: 21st Century Motherhood*  
8th biennial Australian International AMIRCI Conference, July 2016  
RMIT University, Melbourne

2014  
*Motherhood, Feminism and the Future*  
7th biennial Australian International Conference. RMIT University, Melbourne. A selection of these papers can be found in *Motherhood, Feminisms and the Future* (2015; a special edition of the Journal of Family Studies) with Taylor and Francis.

2011  
*Mothers at the Margins*  

2009  
*The Mother and History: Past and Present*  
5th biennial Australian International AMIRCI conference. The University of Queensland, Brisbane.

2007  
*The Mother: Images, Issues and Practices*  

2005  
*Representing and Theorising Maternal Subjectivities*  
3rd biennial Australian International AMIRCI Conference. The University of Queensland, Brisbane. A selection of these papers can be found in *Representing and Theorising Maternal Subjectivities* (2008), edited by Julie Kelso and Marie Porter. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

2002  
*Performing Motherhood: Ideology, Agency and Experience*  
2nd biennial Australian International AMIRCI Conference. La Trobe University, Melbourne.

2001  
*Power/ Oppression*  
Inaugural biennial Australian International AMIRCI Conference. The University of Queensland, Brisbane. A selection of these papers can be found in *Motherhood: Power and Oppression* (2005), edited by Marie Porter, Andrea O’Reilly and Patricia Short. Toronto: Women’s Press.
Venue Information

New Law School (F10): Located on Eastern Ave, Camperdown Campus, The University of Sydney

Location: https://sydney.edu.au/maps/campuses/?area=CAMDAR

- There are two main entrances to the university: one is just past Victoria Park where Broadway becomes Parramatta Road; the other is on City Road at the corner of Butlin Avenue.
- Eastern Ave is a pedestrian only road/walkway on the Camperdown Campus
- The New Law Building is bordered by Fisher Library, Eastern Ave, the Carslaw Building, and Victoria Park (at the rear)
- The ‘New Law Building’ and the ‘Law Annex’ buildings are separate, but connected - next to each other
- The ‘Taste Café’ is within the New Law Annex Building. If you are in the Taste Café, exit the café walking in the direction of the Main Quadrangle, the New Law Building is on your right (as pictured above).

Transport:

- **By Car**
  - There is very limited parking on-campus. The best option besides street parking is to use Broadway Shopping Centre car park. There is $20 all-day student parking on levels 3A and 4 in the North car park. Enter from Bay St and Francis St to access the North parking levels.

- **By Train**
  - Redfern Station is the closest train station but please note it is a 10-15min walk to the Law Building.
  - Central Station is a 15min walk along George St and City Rd, however, buses to and from Central that run along these City Rd or Parramatta Rd are frequent and easy to catch.

- **By Bus**
  - There are convenient stops either on Parramatta Rd or City Rd. There is a City Rd bus stop at the beginning of Eastern Ave where our venue is located.
  - Please use trip-planner to plan your trip with up to date information: https://transportnsw.info/
Rooms:

- **Law Foyer**
  - (Lvl 2 – entrance level) Registration, Keynotes, Performance, AGM, Concurrent Session Room.

- **Bridge**
  - (Lvl 4) General Catering.

- **Common Room**
  - (Lvl 4) Concurrent Session Room.

- **Law Lounge:**
  - Concurrent Session Room (in Law Annex Building [Taste Café] Lvl 1).

- **Break out children’s space:**

**WiFi Instructions**

Step 1: Enable wireless on your device and select the network **UniSydney-Guest**

Step 2: Open your browser. You will be automatically directed to a login page

Step 3: Enter the username **LawConference** and password **LawConference5**
CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 10th JULY

8 – 9am  Registration open

9 – 9.45am  Opening session  Chair: Sophia Brock

Indigenous Acknowledgement of Country
Charmaigne Weldon

Welcome to Conference & general Conference information

9.45 – 10.45am  Keynote: Dr Renate Klein  Chair: Anna Kerr

The Misogyny of Surrogacy: Disappearing Women as Mothers

10.45 -11.30am  Morning Tea

11.30 – 1pm  Concurrent Sessions A

1 – 2.30pm  Lunch

2.30 – 4pm  Concurrent Sessions B

4 – 4.30pm  Afternoon Tea

4.30 – 5.30  PUBLIC LECTURE: Prof Andrea O’Reilly  Chair: Marie Porter


5.30 – 6pm  Performance

Pria Schwall-Kearney
Vee Malnar (Ana Key)

6pm onwards  Reception – drinks and nibbles

THURSDAY 11th JULY

8 – 9am  Registration open

9 – 10am  Keynote: Dr Petra Bueskens  Chair: Virginia Thorley

‘Gillard’s dilemma’: The Sexual Contract and Maternal Citizenship

10 – 10.30am  Morning Tea

10.30am – 12pm  Concurrent Sessions A

12 – 1.30pm  Lunch

1.30 – 3pm  Concurrent Sessions B
3 – 3.30pm    Afternoon Tea
3.30 – 4.30pm  Concurrent Sessions C
4.30-5.30pm    AMIRCI AGM

FRIDAY 12th JULY

8 – 9am        Registration open
9 – 10am       Keynote: Professor Eva Cox AO  Chair: Petra Bueskens

Paid and Unpaid Work – The Need for Some Serious Feminist Rethinking

10 – 10.30am   Conference Closing Comments: Marie Porter AM

Mothering and Power

Thanks: Sophia Brock

10.30 - 11am   Morning Tea

11 – 12.30     Concurrent Sessions A

12.30 – 1pm    Lunch

1 – 2.30pm     Concurrent Sessions B

2.30 – 3       Afternoon Tea

3 – 4.30pm     Concurrent Sessions C
SESSION SCHEDULE
### WEDNESDAY 10th JULY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Chair</th>
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<td>9 – 9.45am</td>
<td><strong>Opening session</strong></td>
<td>Law Foyer</td>
<td>Sophia Brock</td>
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<td>11.30am – 1pm</td>
<td><strong>Concurrent Session A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>A1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Law Foyer</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Surrogacy</strong></td>
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<td>Virginia Thorley</td>
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<td>1-A1  Motherhood for Sale</td>
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<td>Anna Kerr</td>
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<td>2-A1  The Infant Gaze: How surrogacy develops the former goal of closed records adoption to destroy mothers through the destruction of the maternal-neonatal relationship.</td>
<td>Catherine Lynch</td>
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<td>3-A1  Rethinking legislation and policy around surrogate pregnancy arrangements.</td>
<td>Rhonda Shaw</td>
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<td><strong>A2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Common Room</strong></td>
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<td>Sophia Brock</td>
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<td><strong>Breastfeeding Representation</strong></td>
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<td>1-A2  Theorising fleshy citizenship: Representations of breastfeeding politicians in the Australian media.</td>
<td>Marnie Cruickshank</td>
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<td>2-A2  Sharing detachment: Representations of new motherhood on social media and the reinforcement of separation norms.</td>
<td>Nicole Jameson</td>
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<td>3-A2  Websites and oversights: Investigating the shortcomings of lactation management information for bereaved mothers on the websites of Australian health care agencies.</td>
<td>Lara Sweeney</td>
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<td><strong>A3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Law Lounge</strong></td>
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<td>Cindy Renate</td>
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<td><strong>Marginalisation and Resistance</strong></td>
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<td>1-A3  Cultural mothering</td>
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<td>2-A3  Mary Leunig: the art of blood and guts</td>
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<td>Denise Ferris</td>
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1 – 2.30  LUNCH

2.30 – 4pm  Concurrent Sessions B

**B1**  
**Law Foyer**  **Systems and Programs**  
Chair: Barbara Mattar

1-B1  The childbearing woman’s paradigm in contemporary society.  Ellen O’Keefe

2-B1  An outline of the work carried out at ‘Mum’s Cottage’.  Louise Roach

3-B1  Young mothers in out-of-home care: A forgotten cohort.  Amy Gill

**B2**  
**Common Room**  **Motherhood and Family Law – Panel**  
Chair: Anna Kerr

1-B2  The need to recognise maternal rights in International Human Rights Law.  Darelle Duncan  Catherine Lynch  Charmaine Weldon

4 – 4.30  AFTERNOON TEA

4.30 – 5.30  Public Lecture: **Prof Andrea O’Reilly**  
‘Out of Bounds’: Maternal regret and the reframing of normative motherhood.  Chair: Marie Porter

5.30 – 6pm  PERFORMANCE  
Pria Schwall-Kearney  
Vee Malnar (Ana Key): Housewife, She had a baby, She’s a Super Hero

6pm onwards  RECEPTION
THURSDAY 11th JULY

9 – 10am  Keynote: Dr Petra Bueskens  Chair: Virginia Thorley
Law Foyer
‘Gillard’s dilemma’: The Sexual Contract and Maternal Citizenship

10 – 10.30am  Morning Tea

10.30am – 12pm  Concurrent Sessions A

A1  Law Foyer  Pregnancy, Birth and the Postpartum Period  Chair: Joan Garvan
1-A1  Technology of childbirth: A feminist perspective.  Rebecca Coddington
2-A1  ‘One of the most vulnerable times in your life’: Expectations and emotional experiences of support in the early postnatal period.  Kate Johnston-Ataata
3-A1  Tackling maternal anxiety in the perinatal period: Reconceptualising mothering narratives.  Virginia Schmied

A2  Common Room  Creativity and Expression  Chair: Sally Savage
1-A2  Subdivision and self-identity: The impact of motherhood on creativity.  Melisa Gray-Ward*
2-A2  The lost songs of motherhood  Pria Schwall-Kearney
3-A2  Placenta: The sculpture  Rebecca Vandyk & Carla Pascoe

A3  Law Lounge  Disability and the Village within Neoliberalism  Chair: Virginia Thorley
1-A3  Having a child with Down Syndrome: Where do the problems lie?  Fiona Place
2-A3  Mothering children with disabilities: Competing neoliberal frameworks.  Sophia Brock
3-A3  It takes a village but how do we trust the village? Trauma, mothering, and reciprocal care in neo-liberal society.  Cindy Renate
12 – 1.30pm  **LUNCH**

1.30 – 3pm  **Concurrent Sessions B**

**B1**  
Law Foyer  **Contesting Motherhood Narratives**  
Chair: Sally Savage

1-B1  Culturally constructing the ‘bad’ mother: Literary interpretations of infanticide.  
Diana Jefferies

2-B1  “What is incomprehensible”: The myth of maternal omniscience and the judgment of maternal culpability in Sue Klebold’s *A Mother’s Reckoning* and Monique Lepine’s *Aftermath*.  
Andrea O’Reilly

3-B1  ‘And Say We Did’. Reading of an original short story taking a fun and fresh approach to mothering and activism.  
Catherine Walsh

**B2**  
Common Room  **First Peoples Mothers**  
Chair: Virginia Thorley

Anne Maree Payne

2-B2  Embracing Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother. Paradox and tension within conceptualizations of motherhood for Maori.  
Helene Connor

3-B2  Ahi ka: Keeping the home fires burning across new contexts *The Experiences of Maori Mothers at the University of Auckland*.  
Cinnamon Lindsay Latimer (Ngati Whata, Ngati Porou, Ngapuhi)

**B3**  
Law Lounge  **Maternity Services**  
Chair: Barbara Mattar

1-B3  The trouble with consent in maternity services: And how to fix it.  
Catherine Bell

2-B3  Pregnancy and birth outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged women in Australia’s national capital.  
Joan Garvan

3-B3  Becoming a mother and mattering in early 21st Century Australia is an oxymoron: Matricentric feminist advocacy for implementation and evaluation of the 2010-2016 Australian National Maternity Services Plan.  
Belinda Barnett
3 – 3.30  **AFTERNOON TEA**

3.30 – 4.30pm  **Concurrent Sessions C**

**C1**  
Law Foyer  **Lactation Support**  
**Chair:** Virginia Thorley

1-C1  Women supporting women: Volunteering as resistance in a neoliberal climate.  
Alison Boughey

2-C1  The faces of breastfeeding support: Exploring breastfeeding support communities online.  
Nicole Bridges

**C2**  
Common Room  **Online Communities and Mothering**  
**Chair:** Joan Garvan

1-C2  Beyond “combative mothering”: Compassionate mothering in migrant maternal online communities.  
Leah Williams Veazey

2-C2  Artist mothers and virtual collectives: Making art and community from home.  
Zoe Freney

**C3**  
Law Lounge  **Motherhood in Literature and Film**  
**Chair:** Carole Ferrier

1-C3  “If you’re that hungry, why don’t you go and eat shit?”: The mother, the abject, and the Postmaternal in Jennifer Kent’s *The Babadook* (2014)  
Caitlin Still

2-C3  “I sat back … and waited to die” (4) The erasure of self in Helen Hodgman’s *Blue Skies*’  
Barbara Mattar

4.30-5.30pm  **AMIRCI AGM**  
Common Room
FRIDAY 12\textsuperscript{th} JULY

9 – 10am  
\textbf{Law Foyer}  
\textbf{Keynote: Professor Eva Cox AO}  
\textbf{Chair:} Petra Bueskens

\textit{Paid and Unpaid Work – The need for some serious feminist rethinking}

10 – 10.30am  
\textbf{Conference Closing Comments: Marie Porter AM}

\textit{Mothering and Power}

\textbf{Thanks: Sophia Brock}

10.30 - 11am  
\textbf{Morning Tea}

11am - 12.30pm  
\textbf{Concurrent Sessions A}

\textbf{A1}  
\textbf{Law Foyer}  
\textbf{Breastfeeding as Embodied Labour}  
\textbf{Chair:} Barbara Mattar

1-A1  
Valuing women’s milk  
\textbf{Virginia Thorley}

2-A1  
Cultural anxiety and the breastfeeding toddler who doesn’t sleep.  
\textbf{Miranda Buck}

3-A1  
“This is how I’m supposed to be a mum”: Body work and the work of mothering in women’s responses to ongoing breastmilk insufficiency.  
\textbf{Alexandra Smith}

\textbf{A2}  
\textbf{Common Room}  
\textbf{Non-Residential Mothers, Adoption, & Foster Care}  
\textbf{Chair:} Sally Savage

1-A2  
In the wars: The journey to becoming a non-residential mother.  
\textbf{Maegan Johnsen*}

2-A2  
Two mothers: Exploring simple adoption as a legislative framework for children who cannot be cared for in their family of origin.  
\textbf{Karleen Gribble}

\textbf{A3}  
\textbf{Law Lounge}  
\textbf{(Lack of) Choice}  
\textbf{Chair:} Cindy Renate

1-A3  
Motherhood: Choice and expectations.  
\textbf{Renata Anderson}

2-A3  
Towards a feminist autoethnography of stillbirth  
\textbf{Janet Fraser}

12.30pm-1pm  
\textbf{LUNCH}
1 – 2.30pm Concurrent sessions B

**B1**
Law Foyer **Good Mothering**

1-B1 “Yummy mummies” and the sublimation of maternal sexuality in HBO’s *Big Little Lies.*

2-B1 Revealing the tensions in constructing ‘good’ mothering subjectivities within musical mothering.

3-B1 Being a ‘good’ Vietnamese mother: An analysis of the parenting experiences of young single mothers.

**B2**
Law Lounge **Motherhood and Paid Work**

1-B2 Living with and letting go of motherhood and academia: A narrative in seven voices.

2-B2 A career in academia – Challenges for mothers and solo parents.

3-B2 Perceptions of career break and employability of Mothers with STEM qualifications

**B3**
Common Room **Embodied Mothering**

1-B3 Embodied mother-work post-PhD

2-B3 Faux feminism and the symbolic annihilation of physiological mothering practices.

2.30 – 3 AFTERNOON TEA

3-4.30 Concurrent sessions C

**C1**
Common Room **Mothering and Schooling**

1-C1 ‘A mother’s role is to make them flourish’: Mothers resisting, reframing and succumbing to school homework practices.

Chair: Lisa Raith

Rachel Williamson

Sally Savage

Thi Tho Vu

Agnes Bosanquet, Jayde Cahir, Gail Crimmins, Janet Free, Karina Luzia, & Lilia Mantai Ann Werner

Janet Merewether

Josephine Simone

Emma Dalton*

Allegra Holmes

Rachel Lehner-Mear*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-C1</td>
<td>Mothers and mathematics homework</td>
<td>Jennifer Holmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td><strong>Single Mothering</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Sophia Brock</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-C2</td>
<td>Single mothers as agents not victims</td>
<td>Jane Scerri</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-C2</td>
<td>Perceptions of sole mother poverty and welfare in an age of neoliberalism and individualisation.</td>
<td>Emily Wolfinger</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-C2</td>
<td>Single Mothers make history as they put a spotlight on Australia’s Human Rights obligations.</td>
<td>Terese Edwards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACTS
KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

RENATE KLEIN

Associate Professor (formerly in Women’s Studies, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia)  
Co-Founder, Spinifex Press.

The Misogyny of Surrogacy: Disappearing Women as Mothers

In the billion-dollar global surrogacy trade, women are disappeared both as birth mothers and as genetic mothers (egg ‘donors’). Instead, they are viewed as breeders – gestational carriers, incubators, ovens – and invisibilised as anonymous egg ‘donors’. Conversely, a sperm donor dad is proudly talking about being the ‘father of my own child’.

In this keynote I will address the misogyny of commodifying pregnant women to produce quality-tested ‘take-away babies’ for money or love. Similar to prostitution, it is the rich who pay and the poor who serve – and pay the price through loss of a child they grew in their own bodies from their own flesh and bones over nine months. They also face potential harm to their short- and long-term health and fertility. Similar to slavery, pregnant women lose control over their lives as they have to submit to harmful medications, numerous screenings, possibly foetal reduction or abortion. They also have no control over food selection and birth arrangements – all overseen by the patriarchal IVF industry that laughs all the way to the bank.

As surrogacy appears to become mainstream, we need to ask “what’s next?” Are we gradually conditioned to accept a ‘motherless’ world in which genetically CRISPR-ed embryos are placed in plastic biobags and, when cooked to perfection, proudly lifted out of their ‘womb’ by their bio-dads? In response I will suggest that we need a ‘mother revolution’ in which women stand up and reclaim pregnancy and birth as life events in which they are in charge and refuse to obey a patriarchal medical miracle world. Surrogacy needs to be resisted by reducing demand. Stop Surrogacy Now.

ANDREA O’REILLY

Professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada. Founder & Director MIRCI, Founder & Editor-in-Chief the Journal of the Motherhood Initiative, Founder and Publisher of Demeter Press.

‘Out of Bounds’: Maternal Regret and the Reframing of Normative Motherhood

Central to patriarchal motherhood is the belief that all women want to become mothers, that mothering comes naturally to women and that women experience mothering as fulfilling and gratifying: assumptions that I have termed essentialization, naturalization and idealization. In patriarchal motherhood it is assumed (and expected) that all women want to be mothers (essentialization), that maternal ability and motherlove are innate to all mothers (naturalization), and that all mothers find joy and purpose in motherhood (idealization). Over the last few years these dictates of normative motherhood have been countered and challenged by the emergence of what has been termed “the last parenting taboo: maternal regret”. From magazine articles, Marie Claire’s “Inside the growing movement of women who wished they never had kids and Today’s Parent’s “Regretting Motherhood: What Have I Done with My Life?” to scholarly works such as Regretting Motherhood: A Study (Donath, 2017) and The Myth of Mothering Joy: Regretting Motherhood-Why I’d Rather Have Become a Father. (Fischer 2016) mothers, as noted by Anne Kingston in her recent feature article on maternal regret, “are challenging an explosive taboo and pushing the boundaries of accepted maternal response; and reframing motherhood in the process.” Indeed, as author Lionel Shriver commented in reference to her acclaimed 2003 novel We Need to Talk about Kevin in which maternal regret is a central theme, “While we may have taken the lid of sex, it is still out of bounds to say that you do not like your own
kids, that the sacrifices they have demanded of you are unbearable, or perish the thought, you wish you never had them.” The proposed paper, borrowing from Shriver and Kingston’s words will explore how the emergence of the “out of bounds” topic of maternal regret has given rise to a reframing of contemporary mothering to offer a formidable critique of, and corrective to normative motherhood.

PETRA BUESKENS  
Honorary Fellow, School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Australia.

‘Gillard’s dilemma’: The Sexual Contract and Maternal Citizenship

This paper examines Australia’s first female Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s withdrawal of welfare benefits to 150,000 single mothers on the historic day of her ‘misogyny speech’, 9 October 2012. The contrast between Gillard’s rhetoric of gender equality and signing off on the Fair Incentives to Work Bill was striking because it symbolised the discrepancy between women’s standing as free and equal ‘individuals’ in liberal-democratic societies and their standing as mothers. This paper develops the argument, outlined in Bueskens’ new book, that women are normatively free as ‘individuals’ in liberal-democratic societies, but remain constrained as mothers performing unpaid, invisible, care work. Redefining mothers as ‘unemployed’, as the Fair Incentives to Work Bill did, is a pernicious outcome of unfettered neoliberalism, which presupposes that all individuals are free to compete on the same terms. In the context of declining marriage rates and radical cuts to welfare, it is argued that this erroneous assumption has entrenched and exacerbated the problem of women’s and children’s poverty.

EVA COX  
Adjunct Professor, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. Officer (AO) of the Order of Australia.

Paid and Unpaid Work – The Need for Some Serious Feminist Rethinking

Why is there little or no debate among feminists, both quite broadly and certainly locally, for moving part of our income debates from waged/paid work to a Universal Social Dividend? This is happening among many radical groups as it would offer all a non means tested taxable basic social wage that acknowledges both needs and the time contributions that most of us, particularly women, make unpaid. A universal basic income (UBI) is seen by many as both redistributive and able to counter falling demand for paid labour due to technology and environmental damage. There are trials and debates in many places but not amongst feminist women’s groups and it seems to me to offer fertile possibilities of filling most of the gender pay gap. It would also raise the value of what is just seen as ‘women’s work’ and encourage men to cut paid hours to contribute their share.

Wages for Housework was a cry of some earlier feminists but that seems to me to lock us into it. Instead, let’s work out how to revalue social servicing, not via macho materialist Marx or Markets, but devise feminised communal acknowledgement that we should all value and share socially needed unpaid roles.
Motherhood for Sale?

In an Age of Neoliberalism and Individualisation, gestation is increasingly characterised as a service for sale to the highest bidder. Through the numbing use of violent imagery and extensive sexual objectification of women and girls, the capitalist machine continues to dampen the capacity of males for empathy and has simultaneously opened the way for a robust trade in both women and their children. Not only has the sale of women’s bodies for the sexual pleasure of males become increasingly socially acceptable, but a thriving market in reproductive prostitution has now taken hold. Internationally Australians are the biggest customers of surrogacy services and there are increasing calls to lift legal restraints on these commercial arrangements. There is decreasing recognition of the importance of the biological mother to the child and instead wealth is emerging as the main determinant of who is best qualified to parent. The many implications for the human rights of mothers and children are extensive as demonstrated in cases such as that of Baby Gammy. This presentation will consider the urgent need for recognition of maternal rights in both Australian domestic law and international human rights covenants to slow this rapid descent into an Atwoodian dystopia.

The Infant Gaze: How surrogacy develops the former goal of closed records adoption to destroy mothers through the destruction of the maternal-neonatal relationship.

My relationship with my mother collapsed under 1970s patriarchy when I was removed from her for adoption. My theory of “baby love,” defined as the love a neonate has for its gestational mother, has developed from my experience of reunion. This revealed to me that I was unable to love my mother and explains the overwhelming visceral, and unsought, rage that I, and many separated people, testify to feeling throughout our lives. This rage has been theorised as the memory of distress and despair felt by us when our mothers left us, or failed to materialise, after the macrocosmic experience of being born.

Scientific studies back up this theory by recording the reactions of separated neonates, including elevated heart rates, refusal of food, irregular sleeping and excessive crying. We also know that significant childhood stress has long-term, intergenerational impacts. It follows that to deliberately inflict such trauma on neonates without “good cause” is a violation of human rights. Removing babies for family formation through adoption or surrogacy doesn’t constitute “good cause” and speaks to the way motherhood exists in a milieu prioritising neoliberal and individualistic ideals. It’s a matter of urgency that the gestational mother/neonatal relationship is widely enshrined in legislation.

Rethinking legislation and policy around surrogate pregnancy arrangements

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Human Assisted Reproductive Technology Act (2004) sought to regulate clinic-assisted surrogate pregnancy, and, without explicitly stating, accepted altruistic arrangements around surrogacy subject to certain conditions being met. In recent years, commentators have renewed discussion about surrogate pregnancy in the domestic context due to the increasing number of persons entering into these arrangements, as well as travelling overseas to enter commercial arrangements in countries that either allow commercial surrogacy by law or have little or no regulation. In this presentation, I discuss current empirical research based on a scoping study with New Zealand and Australian ART experts in conjunction with data from women who consent to participate in
surrogate pregnancy arrangements. The aim of the discussion is to examine the accounts of these women, against the backdrop of recent calls by moral philosophers and legal scholars to rethink parentage and payment around surrogacy and to make surrogate pregnancy arrangements enforceable under New Zealand law.

Marnie Cruickshank  

Theorising Fleshly Citizenship: Representations of Breastfeeding Politicians in the Australian Media

My paper will take up the conference theme of ‘beyond mothering myths’ through an examination of mediated representations of breastfeeding politicians. It draws on theories of gendered space and embodiment in analysing two major themes emerging from the data. The first major narrative is one which reinscribes the parliament as a masculine space, where the breastfeeding body is positioned as leaky and messy, tainting the seriousness and gravity of the political sphere. The second key narrative, addressed the framing of family life in politics by focusing on gendered reporting practices which culminate to present motherhood and political life as incongruent; reinforcing pervasive binaries such as public/masculine private/feminine. Importantly, a minor but positive counter discourse in the media texts found the breastfeeding body to be symbolic of increased substantive female representation. Findings are used to discuss the media’s efficacy in satisfying the requirements of the fourth estate, and the results are evaluated through a feminist ontology, which understands citizenship corporeally. By drawing on feminist theories of gender, bodies, politics and space to invoke a rich conception of citizenship as fleshy, I argue that the subject citizen’s political authority in accessing sights of legitimacy in law-making can be enhanced or limited by their embodiment.

Nicole Jameson  

Sharing Detachment: Representations of new motherhood on social media and the reinforcement of separation norms

My presentation will focus on a critical analysis of three images of breastfeeding which have been widely shared on social media, particularly among mothers and groups dedicated to mothering. These images are shared as positive representations of birth, breastfeeding and mothering, however a deeper reading reveals the normalisation of the separation paradigm, medical and technological intervention, the prioritisation of individualism, and the disruption of the mother-baby dyad. My presentation will examine how liking and sharing these and similar images on social media reflects the experience of mothers, while also reinforcing cultural ideals and practices of motherhood in which mothers and babies are decentred.

Lara Sweeney, Katherine Carroll, Debbie Noble-Carr, Catherine Waldby  

Websites and oversights: Investigating the shortcomings of lactation management information for bereaved mothers on the websites of Australian health care agencies

This 2018 study asks whether the shortcomings of lactation management care for bereaved mothers reported internationally extends to the online information provided by Australian health care agencies. To assess the inclusivity and quality of lactation management information we created a best-practice framework by drawing on recommendations from current health sciences literature. The 21 websites included in the study belonged to nationally-focused organisations providing information in the areas of breastfeeding, bereavement support and human milk banking. Analysis of the information revealed
its limited and fragmentary nature, the dominance of immediate suppression as the pre-eminent management technique prescribed for bereaved mothers, and the omission of bereaved mothers as viable milk donors. This suggests the bereaved mother’s milk is ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas, 2002) in these online spaces and is indicative of the contemporary sidelining of infant death within women’s health discourses (Layne, 2003). This study reveals that lactation after loss holds a peripheral position among the information-provision priorities of the agencies included in the study, which ultimately undermines the quality and accessibility of health information for women who experience pregnancy loss and infant death.

Siti Rohmanatin Fitriani 1-A3

Cultural Mothering

Mothering activities are culturally learned and constructed. As each culture has its uniqueness, mothering may vary across cultures. The cultural perspectives are contested when the world becomes more globalized. The mainstream culture influences what is considered as good mothering that recognizes expectations imposed to women socially and culturally (Brock, 2014). The enforcement of ‘good mother’ perspective goes through many ways such as news that frames good mother, and parenting programs with certain perspective of mothering. Some mothering practices of cultural minorities are sometimes judged as abusive by mainstream culture. This is what Bamblett (2006) calls ‘cultural abuse’, when for example, Aboriginal culture is reported by the media as supporting and promoting child abuse. In addition, government may be part of the cultural and political enforcement of ‘good mother’ concept such as the Indonesian government that implement national parenting, program, called Family Hope Program (Ministry of Social Affair of Indonesia, 2014), with minimum consideration of cultural diversity on nurturing children.

The pressure of the ‘good mother’ concept may raise the feeling of not being a good enough mother. Such feeling potentially impacts on the confidence of doing mothering roles and the attachment of mother and children (Black, Freund &Maxine, 2014), and in turn on individual’s life (Brock, 2014).

This context leads me to focus on the cultural motherhood of the minority within globalized social and political concept of good mothering.

Denise Ferris 2-A3

Mary Leunig: The Art of Blood and Guts

Mary Leunig is an Australian artist, who categorises her artwork as Drawing but who is identified as a cartoonist because of the kinds of drawings she has published in over 35 years. In this presentation I show Leunig’s incisive drawings and locate her practice in the wider realm of artists critical of the domestic status quo by identifying some of her work’s dominant themes. While these include visualising her distaste for capitalism and “conservative bullshit”, her major preoccupations shine a harsh light on the work of care and the cost of the maternal relationship. Her detailed drawings are highly accomplished, a mixture of fanciful (or not) heroism, domestic surrealism and reality, tender and brutal as well as visceral, extreme, violent but invariably acute. In addition Leunig transgresses social norms by airing, indeed washing, ‘her dirty linen in public’. Estranged from her two grown children, she has both a difficult story and tells difficult stories, the kind marked by great vigour, violence, or fierceness that is — blood and guts. This intense delivery potentially alienates some audiences but I wish to acknowledge the bravery and benefits of her profound transgression. The doggedness, courage and clear demonstration of saying, and representing, the unspeakable.
The Childbearing Woman’s Paradigm in Contemporary Society

All women have a right to equitable, dignified and respectful maternity care.

Respectful maternity care encompasses respect for a woman’s human rights; disrespectful maternity care diminishes this.

It is important to understand and appreciate how the care provided to childbearing women can either promote optimal health or cause long term physical harm and emotional trauma.

The presentation will explore the Distinctive Importance of the Childbearing Period and the Childbearing Paradigm. How current maternity care practice is impacting on child bearing women and the factors that supported health and wellbeing of women rather than those that cause disease. How human rights are implicated in the childbearing process and affirming their application to childbearing women as basic, inalienable rights. Propose a model for change - The Respectful Maternity Care Charter.

Louise Roach

An outline of the work carried out at ‘Mum’s Cottage’

Motherhood was becoming alarmingly difficult for many Mums, with more demands and expectations being placed on them, their journey can become an uphill battle. The concept of ‘Mums’ Cottage’ evolved over six years ago out of the necessity, to give support to Mum's in an ever-changing society; to hold together the family structure and improve general lifestyle.

While examining these issues and endeavouring to address the on-going repercussions of these demands, one aspect became very clear that once a Mother was assisted and given hope, she gained a sense of purpose which had a positive effect on her children and her self-worth. This positive change streams through all aspects of her life and shows ongoing improvements to the children socially, academically and within the family structure. Flowing from this new understanding came the strong drive to provide a special setting where Mothers could come for companionship, respite, mentoring, self-enrichment, counselling and advocacy.

My presentation will set-out the work of Mums’ Cottage, which was eventually established at Holmesville. The Cottage is Co-ordinated by Sr Helen -Anne and all other work is completed by a large group of generous volunteers.

Amy Gill

Young mothers in out-of-home care: a forgotten cohort

Young people in out-of-home care are under significant pressure to become self-sufficient as they transition to independence. Care-experienced young mothers are faced with the additional challenges of parenting at an early age while making preparations for housing, transportation, finances, and other adulthood necessities. They are less likely than other care leavers to complete school or secure employment, and their children experience heightened risks of intergenerational maltreatment and potential placement in out-of-home care. Existing research suggests that supportive placement environments can contribute to positive parenting practices among young mothers in care.

Limited available evidence suggests that, similar to international research, early parenthood is more prevalent among care-experienced young people in New South Wales. However, the unique needs of
this cohort are not recognised in current governmental policies (National Standards for Out-of-home Care, 2011; NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care, 2015). This paper reports on preliminary findings from a survey of practitioners and foster carers in New South Wales regarding support needs within this cohort. Findings from this research may be used in the development of policy and practice models aimed at improving the life trajectories of care-experienced young mothers and their children.

Anna Kerr, Darelle Duncan, Catherine Lynch, Charmaine Weldon

Panel: The Need to Recognise Maternal Rights in International Human Rights Law

This panel will explore how human rights law is failing to protect mothers and children and will investigate the need for inclusion of maternal rights in international treaties and conventions as well as Australian domestic legislation. Panel members will bring to bear not only legal, academic and health perspectives, but also lived experiences. To what extent does society recognise and accord protection to the critical bond that exists between a mother and child? Australia has a long history of removing children from mothers, particularly within indigenous and socio-economically disadvantaged communities. How can we interrupt this tradition of cruel and misogynistic social engineering? How also can we prevent the equality narrative being weaponised to place women at the mercy of their children’s fathers? Is there no escape from tyranny for women once they have conceived?

Rebecca Coddington & Deborah Fox

Technology of Childbirth: A Feminist Perspective

Women’s experience of giving birth has changed dramatically over the past century. Whilst in most high-income countries it is now the cultural norm to give birth in hospital, surrounded by technology, historically this has not always been the case. Up until the mid 1930s the majority of women gave birth at home, attended by a midwife and several family or community members. Whilst the move from home to hospital has been painted as a progression towards safer birth, evidence suggests that intervention rates in hospitals are rising without substantive improvements in health outcomes for women and babies.

Childbirth is a moment of intense emotional, physical and sometimes spiritual transformation for a woman with the potential to leave her feeling immensely powerful as she transitions to motherhood. However, when the patriarchal biomedical model of childbirth dominates maternity care, the focus is on facilitating the work of medical technologists with the woman framed as a passive actor in the process of childbirth.

Our presentation explores the concept of feminist technology in childbirth – technology designed to keep women and babies safe while embracing tools and knowledge that enhance women’s ability to develop, expand and express their human capacities, rather than to override them.

Kate Johnston-Ataata, Renata Kokanović, Paula A. Michaels

‘One of the most vulnerable times in your life’: Expectations and emotional experiences of support in the early postnatal period

Childbearing has cross-culturally and historically been considered a time of vulnerability and transition for new mothers and their babies, as reflected in the existence of ritual postpartum practices. However, large-scale demographic and socio-cultural changes, including individualization and the rise of neoliberal ideas about care and work, together with the decline of ‘lying-in’ or confinement practices in Australia and similar countries has led to many new parents, particularly mothers, finding themselves isolated and unsupported in the early postnatal period. This paper explores how a diverse group of new
parents, predominantly mothers, living in Australia felt and thought about social support in early parenthood, and the support they experienced. Interviewees’ expectations and emotional experiences of support are analysed in the context of discourses of motherhood, family life, and individualization as well their varying social and material circumstances. Based on an in-depth engagement with parents’ narratives (taken from a larger study on emotional experiences of becoming a parent), the paper argues that understanding emotional responses to experiences of support in early parenthood (particularly motherhood) is impossible without an appreciation of both expectations of support, and the influences on such expectations.

Virginia Schmied 3-A1

Tackling maternal anxiety in the perinatal period:
Reconceptualising mothering narratives

For many mothers, worries about pregnancy, birth and parenthood are a source of anxiety. Maternal anxiety can have significant consequences for mothers, children and families, however, approaches to prevention and treatment do not address the impact of the sociocultural context.

In this paper, we examine the role the ‘good mother’ narrative plays in raising anxiety and we present a framework aimed at reconstructing the dominant mothering narrative from one that pathologises and judges mothers, to one that normalises and celebrates the diverse, natural concerns about parenting. We also will draw on the “Mothers’ Day Letters” project to illustrate the potential for shifting dominant, negative narratives of mothering.

The Mother’s Day Letters campaign was launched in May 2018 to celebrate new mothers. Mothers from all backgrounds and ages were invited to compose a letter to an expectant or a new mother to share with them what and who they found particularly helpful during the first-year after birth, and why. We received 125 letters from Australian mothers of diverse cultural backgrounds offering suggestions and words of encouragement to new mothers. Analysis of the letters reveals that messages such as “trust your instincts” reinforce contradictions and reconstruct essentialist discourses surrounding the good mother.

Melisa Gray-Ward 1-A2

Subdivision and Self-Identity: The Impact of Motherhood on Creativity

Like a mother, the archetypal artist is often erroneously mythologised. Yet the work of being an artist, writer, musician or maker is not dissimilar to motherhood: both roles are comprised of repetitive minutiae and momentary profundity. But what happens when the artist becomes a mother?

This paper will examine the identify shift occurring during matrescene for women working in creative practices. It will use case studies and texts to explore how mothers continue making art: when time and money potentially become more finite; the necessity to prioritise paid work over potentially lesser paid or unpaid creative work; whether having limited time aids creativity; how gender informs expectations of women continuing with their artistic careers post-children; the ability to participate in creative residencies and conferences in relation to childcare; (in)affordability/access to childcare while working in studios or co-working spaces; the inherent gender bias against mothers who are touring musicians, and what value modelling creative practice has in a familial context.

In pursuing these questions, this paper examines the identity shift experienced by creatives when becoming a parent, and how this shift can inform the content of one’s creative work.

Pria Schwall-Kearney 2-A2
The Lost Songs of Motherhood

Try googling songs on motherhood. There's not much.

Music has always held a significant place in family life, present at communal gatherings and parties, but also within the home, with mothers singing through births, deaths and everything in between. Women's songs in particular often covered such subjects as fertility, pregnancy, love, marriage, terminations, frustrations with childrearing - even 'the mental load'. Such songlines, passed from woman to girl, offered solace, information, humor, wisdom and connection on such subjects. With the corporatisation/professionalism of music in the twentieth century, the majority of Australian families now experience music as a product rather than participatory - and this music product is largely being written and/or produced by men, for a profit. With this great dwindling of mother's songs, we are losing not only a wealth of knowledge but also connection to our foremothers and a voice in our 'musica franca'. This presentation will weave in a variety of mother's songs from the appalachian (american old-time) tradition with demonstrating the importance of the Songkeeper role mothers have held in families, and will question the possible consequences of the loss of this voice in our culture. Warning - there may be audience participation!

Rebecca Vandyk & Carla Pascoe

Placenta: The sculpture

Placenta is a giant, soft-sculpture model of the human birth apparatus, envisioned by artist Rebecca Vandyk, and created by her with a team of women, using hand-dyed yarn made from recycled cotton t-shirts. The sculpture is much larger than lifesize, with the placenta measuring 3 metres diameter, pitched upright on an angle with the maternal side of the placenta as the frontal aspect. An umbilical cord measures approximately 12 metres, and culminates in a wearable, hooded costume. The sculpture invites viewer interaction, due to the tactile nature of the knitted fabric. The aural environment around the placenta is filled with birth stories of Australian mothers, gleaned from the research of historian, Dr. Carla Pascoe.

Motherhood is in many ways hidden from the community’s view. The work of motherhood is emotional, and yet it is also very physical. This physical work of motherhood has a social invisibility: from the placenta that is discarded happily post-birth, to the years of domestic labour to create the notion of 'home'. This transience of effort is typified by the materiality of Placenta, formed from ‘disposable’ fashion, itself a result of a dangerous flippancy with the earth’s finite resources. Placenta is a monument to the resourcefulness and physical work of women.

Fiona Place

Having a child with Down syndrome: where do the problems lie?

In this paper I look back on my experiences of bringing up a child with Down syndrome. I begin by detailing the pressures of prenatal testing and go on to describe the many trials and tribulations we experienced during my son’s preschool and school experiences. While there were clearly challenges for our family with his disability, the biggest problems were and remain the ableist attitudes of society. I will provide examples of unexamined ignorance and even cruelty, but also focus on the many delights of living with my son who has turned out to be a gifted artist. How can we educate the medical profession and society in general that a test is not always best?
Sophia Brock

Mothering children with disabilities: Competing neoliberal frameworks

This paper shares research examining the experiences of women who mother children with disabilities in the contemporary globalized world. The participants in this study live within competing contemporary ideologies: that of ‘individualisation’ and ‘intensive mothering’. Individualisation presumes all individuals – including women who mother – have the capacity to orchestrate how they live their lives, ‘freely choose’ how they construct and experience their relationships, and enjoy a sense of liberated agency. Yet at the same time, intensive mothering ideology positions mothers as endlessly self-sacrificing primary caregivers of their children – and these expectations are extended and intensified for mothers of children with disabilities. Therefore, the lives of these mothers are framed by competing and highly problematic sets of assumptions and expectations. These competing frameworks have been generated within the context of neoliberalism and individualization. This paper interrogates the consequences of living within these competing frameworks for mothers of children with disabilities. It does so through focusing on how mothers are subject to, reinforce, and resist these pressures. The ‘maternal’ is understood as being a site of both constraint and agency in the contemporary world.

Cindy Renate

It Takes a Village but How do we Trust the Village? Trauma, Mothering, and Reciprocal Care in Neo-liberal Society

What is reciprocal mothering care? And how is it impacted by trauma? This paper explores the relationships between trauma in families of origin, domestic violence, and the social isolation of mothers, specifically how the social isolation of mothers can be considered both a consequence of previous negative experiences and a factor causing further negative experiences, particularly maternal depressive symptoms. It considers that the ability to develop trust and intimacy within families and communities may be negatively impacted for those harmed by or misatuned to primary caregivers or other family members and explores how this sits with the suggestion that recovery from trauma is only possible within relationships (Herman, 1992, 2015). This paper also looks at how a neo-liberal economy, and its accompanying marketisation of care and individualism, has contributed to a rapid shift away from the evolutionary origins of cooperative mothering practices and child provisioning. With mounting maternal distress and overwhelm and calls of "it takes a village" we should not only consider the social obstacles to implementing a village but also investigate how reciprocal mothering care can act as a site of resistance to neo-liberal practices.

Diana Jefferies

Culturally constructing the ‘bad’ mother: Literary interpretations of infanticide

Often, there is a sense of shock and disbelief when a mother murders her child. Yet, literary texts (plays, poems and novels) contain depictions of women experiencing mental illness or feelings of desperation after childbirth and who murder their children. Three literary texts (The Thorn by William Wordsworth, Adam Bede by George Eliot, and Toni Morrison’s Beloved) are examined to understand why a woman may harm her child by investigating how the author positioned the woman, how other characters reacted to the woman before, during, and after the death of the child, and how the literary or historical critical literature sees the woman. Three important points about the woman’s experience are revealed: she is represented as morally ambiguous and becomes marginalised and isolated; she is depicted as murdering or abandoning her child because she is experiencing mental illness and/or she is living in desperate circumstances; and she believes there is no other option. Literary texts can shed light on
socio-psychological struggles women experience and can stimulate discussion about the development of preventative or early intervention strategies to identify women at risk.

Andrea O'Reilly

“What is Incomprehensible”: The Myth of Maternal Omniscience and the Judgment of Maternal Culpability in Sue Klebold’s A Mother’s Reckoning and Monique Lépine’s Aftermath

The paper examines the memoirs of two mothers whose sons, Dylan Klebold and Marc Lépine, committed two of the most infamous school shootings in North America and then died by suicide: Columbine in the United States (1999) and the Montreal Massacre in Canada (1989). The Columbine High School massacre was a school shooting that occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Columbine. Dylan Klebold and his friend Eric Harris killed thirteen people and injured many more. The both later died by suicide. The École Polytechnique massacre, also known as the Montreal massacre, was a mass shooting at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec, Canada that occurred on December 6, 1989. Twenty-five year old Marc Lepine began his attack by separating the male students from the female students and after calling the women a “bunch of feminists” proceeded to kill fourteen women and injured another ten women and four men. He then died by suicide. His suicide note blamed feminists for the failure of his life. The memoirs by Sue Klebold—A Mother’s Reckoning: Living in the Aftermath of Tragedy (2016)—and by Monique Lépine—Aftermath: The Mother of Marc Lépine Tells the Story of Her Life Before and After the Montreal Massacre (2008)—narrate what Klebold terms “coming to terms with the impossible” and Lépine describes as “her descent into nightmare,” as each mother seeks to understand what caused her son to commit the massacre and die by suicide. The paper explores each mother’s journey toward understanding her son’s crime and death through denial, despair, anger, grief, shame, and, eventually, healing. In this paper I examine the normative discourse of good motherhood and how it informs and shapes each mother’s attempt to explain and comprehend how her son, in Lépine’s words, “turned into a heartless murderer” (22). In particular, I address two salient beliefs of normative motherhood: first, good mothers raise good children and bad mothers raise bad children; and second, good mothers, as involved parents, should and must know their children. Klebold and Lépine in their poignant rendering and remembering of mothering deliver a potent critique and corrective to these conjectures of normative motherhood. The first section of the paper on A Mother’s Reckoning examines the myth of maternal omniscience while the second section on Aftermath considers the judgement of maternal culpability. What readers learn in these memoirs of loss is that children may be unknowable and that mothers are not responsible for the actions of their children. In so doing, the memoirs astutely disrupt, dispute, and discredit mother blame as they are enacted in the myth of maternal omniscience as well as in the judgment of maternal culpability.

Catherine Walsh

‘And Say We Did’. Reading of an original short story taking a fun and fresh approach to mothering and activism.

It is only when a woman has a child that she notices the systemic problems which are the unfinished business of gender equality. Women have been writing about the problems of mothering under patriarchy for generations. More than ever, women have opportunities to share their stories, yet change is happening very slowly.

What if there was a parallel history in which all the change had already happened? What would the opposite of The Handmaid’s Tale look like?
This session presents an original short story taking a fun and fresh approach to mothering and activism. The story is open to input from conference attendees to contribute to a finished product. This is a story we can finish together.

Anne Maree Payne  

Untold suffering? Motherhood and human rights violations

The removal of Aboriginal children from their families gained national attention in Australia following the publication of the Bringing Them Home Report in 1997. Notably absent from this report, however, were first-hand accounts of the experiences of Indigenous parents, particularly of mothers, who were often the primary carers or sole parents of removed Indigenous children. This paper explores whether the right to mother is adequately protected by existing UN human rights conventions, and argues that the lack of explicit protection of aspects of the right to mother within the international human rights framework contributes to the failure to identify and address violations of the rights of mothers in human rights inquiries and processes. A number of key factors are identified that contribute to our understanding of Aboriginal mothers’ ongoing silence throughout the Bringing Them Home Inquiry process and beyond, which have wider implications for the identification and investigation of violations of the human rights of mothers.

Helene Connor  

Embracing Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother.  
Paradox and Tension within conceptualizations of Motherhood for Māori

The conceptualization of motherhood for the indigenous Māori of Aotearoa/New Zealand has been historically constructed as “natural” and deeply connected to Papatūānuku [Earth Mother]. This idealization of motherhood for Māori wāhine [women] constructs an identity that is embedded in a social and cultural past which has been eroded by colonisation and Liberal notions of individualisation. Nevertheless, the ideal of an authentic Māori mothering experience steeped in the traditions of Māori culture and heritage are evocative and powerful.

Yet, the institution of motherhood for Māori exists within a space of tension and paradox. While many of the old myths of motherhood are being contested in Western society, within Māori and other indigenous cultures, traditional birthing and mothering practices are being revitalised.

This paper outlines some of the tensions inherent in the revitalization of traditional indigenous mothering. The concept of whanau [family] which is based around an extended family and collectivism is one example. Another is the concept of whaea [mother] which can mean birth mother, auntie, or a woman with no direct kin relationship. These and other examples are in contradiction to individualization and contest Neoliberalism.

The paper also examines the paradox of embracing Papatūānuku [Earth Mother] and traditional maternal practices when assimilation polices, urbanization and colonisation have resulted in significant barriers to maintaining Māori tikanga [culture] and language.
Engaging in tertiary studies is often a positive and rewarding, albeit challenging, life experience for many Māori students. Within education, both Māori students and mothers are marginalised by the dominance of neoliberal and colonial ideologies. Māori mothers are therefore placed at a compelling nexus where they must negotiate different and interacting forms of sexism and racism within academic contexts. This presentation examines how Māori mothers confront and manage challenges encountered in tertiary settings by drawing upon their unique ways of being. Using thematic analysis, informed by a Mana Wahine methodological approach and social constructionism, I situate participants’ experiences within mātauranga wāhine Māori (Māori women’s knowledge) across a backdrop of colonial social formations. This presentation explores three core themes. Theme one, Mātauranga Māori and connecting spheres of whānau and the University, outlines how Māori mothers use whānau as a site of meaning-making, enacting mātauranga wāhine Māori and distinctly Māori ways of being across a range of contexts. Theme two, Institutional Barriers and Colonial Learning Spaces, discusses sociocultural obstacles, and limiting colonial discourses that pervade the university environment. Finally, theme three, Mana wāhine: Leading the way for future generations, explores the incredible knowledge, leadership and imagination Māori mothers bring to their education in order to transform their whānau (family) and wider Māori communities. University systems can find inspiration in mātauranga wāhine Māori in order to create transformative and supportive learning environments for Indigenous mothers.

Catherine Bell

The trouble with consent in maternity services: and how to fix it.

Our insurance driven, medicalised maternity system is giving lip service to women’s rights in the form of ‘informed consent’. The trouble with this is that women are rarely informed and the premise of consent is to comply. Consent is about freeing someone of liability and asking for consent assumes, and implies, that the best action is to say yes.

Many women refer to their birth as a rape. They felt violated at their most vulnerable time, by people who they trusted and who held a position of authority. This keenly felt power imbalance meant they were unable to not consent. Other women experience trauma that is dismissed because ‘they have a healthy baby’.

The maternity system is dismissing women, to the point of near erasure. It is up to women to reclaim, and demand, their visibility. But How?

Instead of ‘informed consent’, we give women the tools they need to focus on Decision Making.

This very simple shift has the potential to significantly reduce the need for intervention and decrease the risks of birth trauma and postnatal depression. This very simple shift rebalances the power between women and care providers.

Joan Garvan

Pregnancy and birth outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged women in Australia’s national capital

Pregnancy and birth are events of social and cultural significance that have been highly medicalized. There are 300,000 plus births across Australia each year. In 2013 97% of births occurred in hospitals, in conventional labour-ward settings; 72% of these were in public hospitals and 28% in private
hospitals. A much smaller proportion of 2% gave birth in birth centres and .3% at home or in other settings. Less than 8% of women can access midwifery led care in Australia even though there is continuing and strong evidence that this has the best outcomes.

The influence of neoliberal policies over recent decades has led to a schism between hospital systems and alternatives offered by private practitioners, midwives, doulas, psychologists or counsellors who assist women and their families to navigate pregnancy and birth along with cooks and cleaners who ease the transition to parenthood.

This has led to a two-tiered system whereby those with the knowledge and the finances can research and employ what they determine to be the best. Vulnerable and disadvantaged women and their families, however, must rely on hospital systems that are under pressure. Framed within this related research my paper draws from interviews with selected practitioners in Canberra so as to gain some insight into the outcomes of pregnancy, birth and the transition to parenthood for vulnerable and disadvantaged women in Australia’s national capital.

Belinda Barnett

3-B3

Becoming a mother and mattering in early 21st century Australia is an oxymoron: Matricentric feminist advocacy for implementation and evaluation of the 2010-2016 Australian National Maternity Services Plan

When women in Australia become mothers, they often experience a social demotion and shift in power dynamics across multiple contexts which contributes to inequitable social, economic and health outcomes for mothers over the immediate and longer term. One of the contexts in which pregnant women and mothers experience significant power differentials is in their interactions with maternity services. The implementation of maternity service reforms committed to by the Australian, State and Territory Governments in the 2010-2016 Australian National Maternity Services Plan (NMSP) would arguably have contributed to redressing some of these power differentials that pregnant women and mothers encounter. However, the benefits that were envisaged at the outset of the NMSP were largely not realised and the Australian Government has developed a (draft) National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services (NSAMS) which was not informed by an independent evaluation of the NMSP.

This presentation will outline a case study illustrating the actions of matricentric feminist activists in a Queensland community who advocated for equitable implementation of the NMSP and its subsequent evaluation to inform the NSAMS. Barriers that hindered the implementation of these reforms will be explored and recommendations made for improving Australian women’s access to respectful, evidence-based maternity services.

Alison Boughey

1-C1

Women Supporting Women: Volunteering as resistance in a neoliberal climate

Women require support to be able to undertake the labour intensive, demanding and often difficult task of breastfeeding. However, Neoliberal policies tend to focus health care on reactive rather than preventative and supportive strategies. Breastfeeding is undervalued, under researched and under siege although it’s a powerful modifier of women’s health, children’s wellbeing, our economy, our environment and our society. Infant formula is a 70 billion dollar worldwide market, with 5 billion dollars spent annually just on marketing. It is a Neoliberal success story.

In Australia the gap between the help needed to initiate and maintain breastfeeding and that which is supported economically has been bridged by other mothers. The Australian Breastfeeding Association
ABA) has become the leading authority for breastfeeding support, promotion, education and advocacy in Australia, built on capacity given by women to each other. The National Breastfeeding Helpline receives around 6,500 calls each month and is staffed by volunteers who contribute over 28,000 hours to the service each year. This paper will discuss the unique example of women supporting women to maintain a normal bodily function in the face of a barrage of neoliberal policies that undermine and sabotage the right to be fed normally.

Nicole Bridges 2-C1

The Faces of Breastfeeding Support:
Exploring Breastfeeding Support Communities Online

This presentation will discuss a recently submitted PhD study that employs an online ethnographic research approach to explore the experiences of parents seeking, receiving and giving breastfeeding support online, and the nature of that support. The quantitative data collection for this netnography was undertaken by the researcher following the activities of 15 individual ABA-sanctioned closed Facebook groups.

The findings presented explore the characteristics and contents of the queries and responses, illustrating how Facebook can be used to provide social support in addition to learning and coping strategies in these online communities. In terms of breastfeeding support, social media is a relatively new method of providing that support. It is hoped that by focusing on the emergence of new technologies and adopting social media as a mainstream method of breastfeeding support, we can assist the current generation of mothers as they adapt mothering in response to new technologies and online worlds.

Leah Williams Veazey 1-C2

Beyond “combative mothering”: Compassionate mothering in migrant maternal online communities.

Drawing on my doctoral research on migrant mothers’ online communities in Australia, this paper explores how the administrators of diverse migrant maternal online communities create and curate them as spaces of trust and support. I propose a concept of ‘compassionate mothering,’ understood as a mode of mothering in which women are encouraged to engage with other mothers with empathy, especially when they encounter differences in maternal practice. This mode of mothering can be set against more confrontational tropes such as “combative mothering” (Moore & Abetz 2016) or “the mommy wars” (Douglas & Michaels 2004) and is specifically aimed to facilitate maternal communities where women can exchange information and support.

The paper analyses how administrators shape the groups into gendered and geographically-based sites of belonging and trust, using ‘meta-maternal practices’ to establish a behavioural norm of compassion between mothers and build migrant maternal solidarities. These ‘meta-maternal practices’ include establishing and maintaining boundaries and behaviours through role-modelling, empathetic interventions and compassionate discipline, and nurturing relationships between the members. Drawing on a concept from Black feminist scholarship, I suggest that this constitutes a kind of digital “community mothering” (Collins 1991, 2000a; Edwards 2000), in which a maternal “ethic of care” extends beyond the needs of one’s own children into maternally-based community service and community-building.
Artist Mothers and Virtual Collectives: making art and community from home

Artists who are mothers are still disadvantaged in the trajectory of their careers by the patriarchal institutions of motherhood and the art world, as well as by the physical realities of mothering that may prevent them from their professional creative practices. Despite the contemporary discourse around equality in the home and the workplace, women still carry the burden of the majority of domestic chores. Women are still paid less, generally and in the arts, than men, making it difficult to justify maintaining an art practice when outsourcing care work is so expensive, financially and emotionally. In the 1970s the Women’s Art Movement and other feminist art organisations in Australia and internationally empowered women artists through collectivity and community. At this time many mother-artists also found support in these models of collective art practices. This paper will examine the ways in which technology and the internet are changing and expanding the ways mother artists can connect and form communities and how this shapes their art. It will explore in particular An Artist Residency in Motherhood, an ‘open source artist residency to empower and inspire’ mother artists.

Caitlin Still

“If You’re That Hungry, Why Don’t You Go and Eat Shit?”: The Mother, The Abject, and the Postmaternal in Jennifer Kent’s The Babadook (2014)

I take my title from a line spoken by Amelia, protagonist of The Babadook (2014). In this film, the widowed lone mother’s depression figures as possession by the titular monster, in an Australian example of maternal horror. Sarah Arnold’s theorisation of this subgenre is substantially underpinned by Kristeva’s concept of abjection. In Powers of Horror (1982), Kristeva implies that in defining life through its negation, the abject paradoxically upholds life. The abject thus intersects with the maternal, though this is necessarily disavowed within the dominant patriarchal narrative of motherhood.

As Adrienne Rich argues, the patriarchal regulation of motherhood might be traced to a “haunting” by the universal fact of dependency on the mother for one’s very existence. This suggests the signifying potential of haunting in the context of postmaternalism (Julie Stephens, 2011), which has functioned to relegate the maternal to the private sphere in an age of neoliberalism. Like the abject, the maternal has been construed as existing beyond the purview of public life, despite being that which upholds it. The according implications for women’s citizenship have been reflected in policy changes in the early millennium, particularly those instituted by the Howard government. I will therefore present a reading of The Babadook as a reflection of its postmaternal context.

Barbara Mattar

“I sat back…and waited to die” (4) The erasure of self in Helen Hodgman’s Blue Skies

This paper offers a close analysis of an under-researched Australian novel that represents pregnancy and early motherhood as a burdensome, joyless responsibility from which the mother must escape. The un-named first person narrator is unable and unwilling to transition into “a role I didn’t choose” (Hodgman 1976, 59). Deliberately shunning the “discourses” (Miller 2007) of a good suburban mother, the narrator chooses risk and individuality over attributes typical of good motherhood such as sacrifice and nurture. The narrative explores her path to self-destruction by reflecting on the changing natural landscape of coastal Hobart and the effect of the new urban environment. Hodgman’s text is a complete denial of what Sacks terms “matrescence” (2018) and positions self-erasure as the only possible outcome for a woman who refuses to acknowledge motherhood as a constantly shifting terrain between the needs of self and the needs of another. The lack of naming the mother acts as metaphor for the
silence surrounding the loss of womanhood and the emergence of a new sense of self as mother. Blue Skies is a key literary example of narrower views of motherhood explored during second wave feminism, a view that has been inherited among notable examples of twenty-first century Australian fiction.

Virginia Thorley 1-A1

Valuing Women's Milk

Breastfeeding is embodied labour and care work. Robyn Lee explores these issues in the context of corporeal generosity and describes the pressures on mothers of the concept of 'neoliberal motherhood' and productive versus reproductive labour, as have other authors.

In money-focused societies, women’s milk is considered free, carrying no economic value, and so is subtly devalued. Society at all levels may see no particular benefit in feeding babies on it if replacement food is available. Historically, in regions where breastfeeding was customarily abandoned for generations, underlying this practice was the belief that women’s milk had no value whatever and was an inferior food.

Something that costs money is valued, no matter the lack of equivalence and the hidden health costs. Today, replacing woman’s milk with manufactured substitutes creates wealth for shareholders (if not for farmers), and jobs in manufacturing, transport and health care, and contributes to the tax system. Unless substantial environmental, financial and health costs are factored in, formula feeding appears beneficial to the economy. Dr Julie Smith recommends the inclusion of breastmilk in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), an achievable exercise, to establish its value and the value of women’s time in terms that policy-makers acknowledge.

Miranda Buck 2-A1

Cultural Anxiety and the Breastfeeding Toddler who doesn’t Sleep

The continued breastfeeding of toddlers for 2-3 years is optimal as a public health recommendation for the wellbeing of mothers and their children. Lactation is an important modifier of mothers’ risk of breast cancer, heart disease and diabetes. The hormones of breastfeeding are protective of mothers’ mood but breastfeeding is also a significant investment women make in terms of time, bodily autonomy and emotional energy. In many parts of the world breastfeeding toddlers is commonplace, but in Australia merely 20% of infants are continuing to breastfeed at one year of age and only around 5% remain breastfed at two years of age. Neoliberal societies are characterised by independence, individualism and an emphasis on consumption and recreation. These cultural traits tend to make the transition to the dependency, vulnerability and embodied work of motherhood particularly challenging for women. Mothers are under pressure to return to paid work and ‘get back to normal’ levels of sleep. This presentation discusses the cultural influences of neoliberalism on Australian toddlers’ and considers the maternal battlegrounds of sleep, breastfeeding, work and bodily autonomy.

Alexandra Smith 3-A1

“This is how I’m supposed to be a mum”: Body work and the work of mothering in women’s responses to ongoing breastmilk insufficiency

In this presentation I discuss women’s experiences and body practices at the intersection of breastfeeding, ongoing milk insufficiency, and milk sharing. My research with women in Australia and the US explores the interconnectedness of body work and mothering work, and how intercorporeal
(between-body) practices – such as milk sharing and the use of at-breast supplementing devices – are implicated in women’s responses to milk insufficiency.

At this intersection, maternal bodies and mothering are seen as constituted and reconfigured by intercorporeal practices that encompass such preindustrial tropes as wet nursing and ‘village’ support, while breastfeeding and maternal identity are simultaneously sustained through the intensive bodywork and technological (dis)embodiment offered by breast pumps and feeding aids.

I explore these phenomena through a conceptual frame comprised of corporeal and postconstructionist feminism (Bartlett 2005; Grosz 1994; Lam 2016) and Deleuzo-Guattarian (1987) ideas of flows, becomings and deterritorialisation. This approach highlights the ways in which body practices enacted to sustain breastfeeding may be radicalised and radicalising, while also reflecting socially sanctioned mother-work and internalising dominant conceptualisations of the (physiologically and morally) ‘failing’ maternal body. These women, and this paper, embody such contradictions, and ultimately present continued breastfeeding concurrent with ongoing insufficient milk as a complex act of radical mothering.

Maegan Johnsen

In the Wars: The Journey to Becoming a Non-residential Mother

In the past decade, the number of Australian children with mothers who live elsewhere has been on the rise. Women who live apart from their children challenge deeply-entrenched, traditional ideologies of motherhood; ideologies that inform, often unconsciously, well-meant interventions by social workers. While the experiences of non-residential mothers are diverse, becoming non-residential is arguably a universally traumatic experience which has a significant and lasting impact on the emotional and psychosocial well-being of the women who live under these circumstances. This qualitative study explores the experiences of ten Australian women who have navigated the journey to non-residential motherhood following the breakdown of a parental relationship. Scaffolded on feminist principles, the primary aims of this research have been theorise and understand non-residential motherhood and to position the voices of women who have endured this experience at the front and centre of a discussion about safe, appropriate and effective social work intervention with non-residential mothers. The author’s findings suggest that a social worker’s awareness of their own unconscious bias, a willingness to understand a non-residential mother’s experience and the adoption of a therapeutic, trauma informed approach is essential when working with all mothers living apart from their children.

Karleen Gribble

Two mothers: Exploring simple adoption as a legislative framework for children who cannot be cared for in their family of origin

Large numbers of children reside in long-term foster care in Australia. Unfortunately, the placement instability and a lack of felt security associated with foster care, is demonstrated to result in poor outcomes for children. Adoption has been presented as a way of providing children who cannot live with their family of origin, with stability, love, belonging and better outcomes. This is a contentious proposition. Open adoption is normative practice in Australia meaning that adopted children retain knowledge of, and usually contact with, their birth family. Nonetheless, adoption as legislated in Australia, is considered highly problematic by many as it legally severs the familial relationship children have with their birth families and erases the legal identity they held prior to their adoption. This subtractive model of adoption, requires children to lose their legal connection to, and identity in, their birth family, in order to establish a new legal connection to, and identity in, their adoptive family. However, in some jurisdictions, an additive model of adoption, that creates a new family relationship
with adoptive parents while retaining the legal connection to birth parents, exists. This is called simple adoption. This presentation will discuss ongoing research into the views of those with experience of foster care and adoption on simple adoption.

Renata Anderson 1-A3

**Motherhood: choice and expectations**

Many aspects of motherhood are framed in terms of choice. In this paradigm, women choose how they wish to give birth, if and how long they will breastfeed and whether to be a stay-at-home mother or return to work.

However, a closer examination shows that these choices are constrained. For example, birth ‘choices’ can be limited by pregnancy risk status, unplanned emergencies during labour, limited service provision and hospital processes. Women report that health professionals often do not listen to their birth preferences or seek informed consent, which results in unwanted birth interventions (use of forceps, episiotomies, unplanned caesarean).

WHO guidelines recommend that mothers exclusively breastfeed for six months. Though most women intend to follow these guidelines, a lack of support establishing the practice, inadequate maternity leave, weight stigma and a society that frowns upon public breastfeeding, means that this is not possible for many women. Limited access to maternity leave, childcare and other economic pressures also limit women’s parenting choices. Single mothers are trapped within a policy construct that cycles between incentivising them to stay at home to raise children and using punitive welfare policies to force them to work.

Because these aspects of motherhood (and more) are viewed as individual choices, women can feel that if they are struggling it is their own fault. This can act as a barrier to help-seeking and compound feelings of stress, failure and isolation.

Drawing from Women’s Health Victoria’s recent publication, *Great Expectations: How gendered expectations shape early mothering experiences*, this presentation will focus on how unrealistic and often contradictory expectations placed on mothers impact their health and wellbeing.

Janet Fraser 2-A3

**Towards a feminist autoethnography of stillbirth**

The rate of stillbirth Australia is 7.4 per 1000 births or, put another way, 1 in 137 births (Stillbirth Centre of Research Excellence, 2019). There are millions of stories online, largely first person accounts, each moving and unique. There is also a wealth of medical studies.

Women’s experience of stillbirth differs significantly depending on the model of care in which their loss occurs. Analysing the factors around this also requires looking at the highly contested nature of choice in maternity care. Stillbirth outside of hospital is necessarily a tiny minority of losses since so few babies are born at home. (0.9% 2010, of which 99.7% were live born (Australia’s Mothers and Babies Report, (2010). This amounts to four babies in 2010 being stillborn and two babies in 2009 (Australian Mothers and Babies Report, 2009). My baby was one of those two in 2009.

Utilising an autoethnographic approach, this paper seeks to embed one stillbirth story in the wider social framework around maternity care, homebirth activism and the fight for women’s autonomy in birth. I will be referencing media reports, coronial proceedings and findings, my experience of stillbirth and that of other women I interview.
"Yummy mummies" and the sublimation of maternal sexuality in HBO's Big Little Lies

Ideologies of ‘intensive mothering’ continue to dominate contemporary understandings of what constitutes a ‘good mother’, working in tandem with the postfeminist, neoliberal illusion of choice (McRobbie, 2007) to create expectations of mothers that are almost impossible to meet. In recent years, this has seen the anxieties and ambivalence surrounding motherhood manifest in popular culture texts that engage with these prevailing ideologies in complicated, diverse ways, vacillating between dismantling and reinforcing them. Drawing from sociocultural literary criticism, this paper offers a close reading of one such example - HBO’s Big Little Lies, a series lauded as a story of female empowerment and solidarity. I consider the show’s appeal against the backdrop of the #MeToo and Time’s Up campaigns (given its narratives of sexual and domestic abuse), while identifying aspects within it which appear to actively resist discourses of idealized motherhood. Ultimately, however, I argue that Big Little Lies is more complicit with conservative ideologies of good mothering than critics have suggested, due, in part, to its departures from the novel it was based on, combined with its sublimation of maternal sexuality into familiar ‘mama-bear’ tropes. Consequently, Big Little Lies problematically reiterates hegemonic motherhood through its neoliberal emphasis on individual responsibility over a (feminist) interrogation of systemic structures around motherhood and parenting.

Revealing the Tensions in Constructing ‘Good’ Mothering Subjectivities within Musical Mothering

Intensive mothering has become the dominant model of gendered and classed parenting in Australian society in recent decades. Musical mothering is one version of this practice with its intentional and systematic approach to support and develop musical attributes in children. This paper is based on an intergenerational study that explored experiences of ten women’s relationship to music and their mothering practices. The study employed a narrative methodology alongside Bourdieusian and feminist theory to analyse the intersection of music, motherhood, gender, class, and generation. The study revealed a diversity of musical mothering practices: the field of mothering, family habitus, and music are negotiated differently to construct ‘good’ and moral mothering subjectivities in line with middle-class sensibilities. In this presentation, I outline a tension in these processes. On the one hand, musical mothering adheres to neoliberal practices to develop dispositions in children aimed at success in competitive educational and workplaces. But such instrumental practices are, on the other hand, mollified by musical mothering that embodies human connectedness, belonging and community. This tension points to a possibility for musical mothering that extends beyond class interested practices in concerted cultivation.

Being a ‘Good’ Vietnamese Mother: An Analysis of the Parenting Experiences of Young Single Mothers

Dominant ideas of ‘the good mother’ have been well documented in Western societies. However, very limited investigations have been conducted in Vietnam regarding socio-cultural constructs of ‘the good mother’ and styles of mothering. Drawing on two focus groups with twelve single mothers living in the rural area of Hai Phong and Hanoi centre, photo diaries and follow-up interviews with six of the twelve, this article considers the applicability of feminist conceptualisations of good mothering for a Vietnamese context. The article argues that both urban and rural single mothers take on a form of
‘intensive mothering’ which involves emotional and financial sacrifices, immobility and intense labour force participation. The research participants reported experiencing stigma that is based on gender and family norms that are culturally produced but vary across different regions. Good mothering is found to be shaped by local economies, cultural values, geopolitical history and globalisation.

Agnes Bosanquet, Jayde Cahir, Gail Crimmins, Janet Free, Karina Luzia, Lilia Mantai, Ann Werner

Living with and letting go of motherhood and academia: a narrative in seven voices

Building on a growing body of literature exploring academic motherhood (Young & Wright, 2001; Raddon, 2002; Fothergill & Feltey, 2003; Acker and Armenti, 2004; Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Klocker & Drozdzewski, 2012), this paper presents a collective autoethnography from seven women academics, university professional staff and ex-academics in three countries. Illustrating the complexity of the identity categories of ‘academic’ and ‘mother’, we reflect on being researchers/non-researchers, academics/non-academics, and mothers/non-mothers. Our accounts offer a rich description of messiness and fractured identities in and out of academic contexts. The pressures of neoliberalism, and the emphasis on individual performance measures, research outputs, impact metrics and targets that disproportionately impact women (Aronson & Swanson 1991; Grant & Knowles, 2000; Probert, 2005; Grant, 2006) are keenly felt. In our stories, differences are evident between imagined visions of motherhood and academia, and the complex realities of precarious work, sick partners and children, and changing conceptions of success. Underpinning this paper is a critical feminist perspective (Lipton & McKinlay, 2016; Thwaites & Pressland, 2016; Ahmed, 2017), which takes subjectivity to be constructed in relation to others and the world, and enmeshed in complex and unequal structures of discourse and power.

Janet Merewether

A Career in Academia - Challenges for Mothers and Solo Parents

Before becoming a solo mother by chance, and completing my Doctorate at the age of 42, I looked forward to the ideal career that could incorporate my extensive teaching skills, research interests and desire to develop new documentary film projects. Little did I expect the barriers to progression within Academia I was to encounter.

This paper will examine the realities of the dead-end casual ‘mommy track’ (Kingston, 1988), the emotional burden endured by the ‘sandwich generation’ (Miller, 1981) torn between working, caring for children and aging parents, and gender discrimination.

In many workplaces tensions exist between mothers and childless women, as well as members of the privileged ‘baby-boomer’ generation who resist retirement and frequently fail to mentor younger women from ‘Gen X’. Solo mothers struggle with the requirement to attend interstate and international conferences, and other women require a partner or active extended family member with work flexibility to support their work demands.

It is evident that many highly-credentialed women science teachers, PhDs and researchers are dropping out of their fields to support elite level extra-curricula activities for their children. Over decades, men ascend the ranks to secure Professorial roles, whilst mothers are pressured to accept insecure, low status and poorly renumerated casual contracts, despite their higher qualifications and achievements. The wage discrepancy is stark.
Some solutions I propose are the creation of more permanent part-time Lecturer roles, part-time ARC funding, and fairer workplace and research policies. Until some of these structural challenges are solved, we will continue to witness the under-representation of women in senior roles within Academia in both Australian and international institutions of learning.

Josephine Simone 3-B2

**Perceptions of career break and employability of Mothers with STEM qualifications**

The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) industry is a key industry and STEM skills are becoming increasingly important. When women, particularly mothers choose to take a career break, they often face a combination of complexities and barriers in relation to returning to the workforce, which are even more prevalent when attempting to return to the STEM Industry. Career related return to work issues exist, as well as STEM workforce and structural issues. Achieving work life balance can be difficult for many mothers re-entering the workforce, which is further compounded by the influence of social norms and cultural beliefs. My proposed research focuses on addressing return to work issues to enhance employability from the perspective of mothers with STEM qualifications who have had a career break. This research will consider mothers with STEM qualifications employability perceptions, strategies, lessons learnt and expectations to determine how their employability can be evaluated and managed. The research findings are important to improving return to work outcomes for mothers with STEM qualifications. The nature of women’s careers has evolved and changed significantly, due to their personal circumstances and surrounding environment and it is imperative that women, particularly mothers remaining employable as their career focus changes.

Emma Dalton 1-B3

**Embodied Mother-Work Post-PhD**

This paper will discuss embodied mother-work. It takes its understanding of mother-work from Sara Ruddick’s concept of maternal practices. Ruddick lists three maternal practices: preservative love, nurturing and training (Ruddick 1990, p. 17). Ruddick proposes that through engaging in these practices the mother develops a type of thinking which may be referred to as maternal thinking.

I submitted my doctoral thesis five days prior to the birth of my second child. I write this abstract almost exactly two years after, heavily pregnant with my third. This paper will blend personal experience with feminist dramatic criticism (Dolan 1988), because I – its writer – have been trained to analyse playscripts and performances, and because I – its writer – am engaging in maternal practices daily. When I present this paper, I will be in the early months of parenting a new baby. My youngest child will be between four and five months old. The finished product, I hope, will offer an illustration of how I, a feminist critic, have blended Motherhood Studies with feminist dramatic criticism to analyse recent works by contemporary Australian female playwrights, and how I, a mother of three, relate my maternal practices to those I read in text and see on the stage.

Allegra Holmes 2-B3

**Faux Feminism and the Symbolic Annihilation of Physiological Mothering Practices**

The symbolic annihilation of physiological mothering practices contributes to its devaluation. I assert that because Western capitalist patriarchy cannot commodify the true value of physiological mothering, that is, the potential to ultimately liberate women from patriarchal
oppression; it must instead undermine it at every opportunity. I discuss my own visual art practice and artwork, outlining how both offer an empowered counter-narrative of what it means to mother in an embodied way, challenging the perceptions of ‘normal’ mothering and drawing attention to capitalist, patriarchal forces that continue to disparage physiological mothering practices. In particular, I contrast my artwork with Clare Rothstein’s viral breast-pumping photograph of Rachel McAdams. I examine the visual complexity of this image and images like it, the multitude of meanings layered within them and the impact this has on the perception of mothering by a society that continues to valorize individualism, and therefore misunderstand and ultimately disregard the entwined subjectivity of the mother-baby dyad. Additionally, I discuss how faux feminism further undermines physiological mothering practices by perverting feminist ideology and creating mainstream motherhood narratives that seem feminist, but ultimately aren’t, reinforcing the need for matricentric feminism in a society that still does not understand the complexity of the mothering experience.

Rachel Lehner-Mear 1-C1

‘A mother’s role is to make them flourish’: Mothers resisting, reframing and succumbing to school homework practices

Homework for 4-11 year old children is ‘virtually ubiquitous’ (Medwell and Wray, 2018) in many Western countries, yet simultaneously it is mothers’ labour (Hutchison, 2012). Current expectations that mothers engage with this supplementary education work interact with maternal identities to produce normative behaviours. This paper presents preliminary findings from a study of mothers’ homework narratives, to reveal mothers working within, and sometimes against, structural, moral, social and self-prescribed expectations which have roots in underlying mothering ideologies. Whilst assumed to be part of a home-school partnership, maternal constructions of homework actually function to variously bolster or challenge common mothering ideologies, such as good mothering (Goodwin and Huppatz, 2010), intensive mothering (Hays, 1996), mothering for schooling (Griffiths and Smith, 2005) and educationally participative, competitive mothering (Landeros, 2011). The mother narratives gathered indicate: varying ways homework is constructed, negotiated and narrated by mothers; mothers’ homework behaviours; and homework’s relationship with maternal identities. This paper proposes that prevailing mothering ideologies force mothers to make particular choices about homework and their place within it. Homework, mothering myths and current individualistic school practices thus entwine to burden the modern primary school mother. This paper explores the ways mothers resist, reframe or succumb to the homework question.

Jennifer Holmes 2-C1

Mothers and Mathematics Homework

The role of mothering extends to mathematics homework. But do mothers have the resources and support needed to continue the teaching of mathematics begun in the classroom? Government initiatives in parent engagement are encouraging parents to do more including providing direct help for their child (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2018; Singhal, 2018). A wide variety of parent engagement programs are run at schools following a school deciding on the needs of its population. Differences in the programs may be due to a stereotype of parent abilities and commitment to education that result in disadvantage for parents in lower socio-economic areas and possibly consequently their children. The presenter will discuss research that suggests that the schools that assisted parents regarding their child’s mathematics were only schools in higher socio-economic areas that already exhibited a robust parent engagement culture. In these schools, programs were developed that outlined to parents how the mathematics was being taught and the specific language used to avoid confusion between home and school. The presenter will also describe the research which is designed to identify similarities and differences in the parent’s abilities in different socioeconomic areas that may uncover myths concerning parents assisting their child with mathematics.
Jane Scerri

Single Mothers as Agents not Victims

My research titled *The Power and the Passion since Whitlam* examines how single motherhood can be viewed advantageously within the framework of feminism. Using motherhood (Rich, de Beauvoir, Maroney) and feminist (*écriture feminine*) theory I will discuss the representation of single mothers in Australian literature since the introduction of the Single Mother’s pension in 1973. The novelist’s work I examine include Helen Garner, Beverly Farmer, Amanda Lohrey and Deborah Robertson. As a feminist I view single mothers as a force for change, in that their positive lived experiences explicate the fact that women can and do live outside of, and hence subvert and challenge patriarchal norms, hierarchies and myths. Identifying aspects of single motherhood, and its representations in Australian literature identifies how a single mother, while required to attend to the practical aspects of running a home, is afforded agency, control and choice to shape her world; including her creative life, her ongoing sex/love life and her career. Given that in 2018 there are more single mother households than ever before, and the fact that male/female wage disparity is still more than fifteen percent, there is still comparatively little in the way of literature that reflect this.

Emily Wolfinger

Perceptions of sole mother poverty and welfare in an age of neoliberalism and individualisation

In the last several decades, neoliberal discourse has dramatically reshaped welfare policy in the Western industrialised world through its emphasis on economic participation, self-reliance and personal accountability. Literature shows that institutional discourses about sole mothers shifted during this period to concerns over welfare dependency and reduced responsibility. However, less is known about the role of neoliberal discourse in shaping people’s perceptions of sole mother poverty and welfare. This paper will report on findings from research that explored online news comments published in response to the Gillard government’s 2012-2013 sole parent welfare amendments – a period of intense welfare debate.

A thematic analysis of these responses was conducted in NVivo 11. Comments were then examined within an analytical framework that drew on post-structural and feminist perspectives and included Caroline Bacchi’s ‘What’s the Problem Represented to Be?’ method. The main purpose of this analysis was to examine the relationship between neoliberal discourse and perceptions of sole mother poverty and welfare in Australia, and to illuminate other dominant discourses and alternative perspectives. Thematic analysis revealed several themes that typically reflected neoliberal and individualist discourses with character flaws, individual choices and poor budgeting the most dominant sub-theme. This paper will argue that under neoliberalism a ‘good mother’ is one who is engaged in paid work, as well as intensive mothering. As such, sole mothers in receipt of welfare are recast as lazy, irresponsible parents, economic burdens and reproductively careless.

Terese Edwards

Single Mothers make history as they put a spotlight on Australia’s Human Rights Obligations

“We ask women to raise children as if they don’t work and then we ask women to work as if they don’t raise children” Imagine solo-mothering in the context of a $1.6B child support debt, significant cuts to income support and the financial contribution of care is not acknowledged. The presentation will provide the context of the political policy environment that is shaping and influencing single
motherhood. Choices are removed, intervention is based upon post-code and surveillance is at an all time high. The National Council of Single Mothers and their Children Inc lodged an Individual Complaint against the Australian Government using the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. The first complaint accepted by the United Nations and it is currently under investigation. The presentation will explain the bold decision taken by a small NGO and a single mum who battles hardship, and why they joined forces. It will take attendees on the journey of the imagining, the writing and then speaking at the Convention on the Status of women, United Nations in March 2019.
BIOGRAPHIES
RENATA ANDERSON
Renata Anderson is Policy and Health Promotion Officer at Women’s Health Victoria (WHV). She was the lead author of the recent paper, Great Expectations: How gendered expectations shape early mothering experiences. WHV is a not-for-profit, statewide women’s health promotion, advocacy and support service. WHV works with women, health professionals, researchers, policy makers, service providers and community service organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women.

BELINDA BARNETT
Belinda Barnett is a psychologist and a PhD candidate at the School of Education, University of Queensland. Belinda has worked voluntarily as a member of various community organisations that advocate for advancing women’s and mother’s rights.

CATHERINE BELL
Based on Feral Farm, Catherine Bell is a homeschooling Mother, a Wife, The Birth Cartographer and creator of The Birth Map. She thought she was a Feminist before motherhood – but it was becoming a mother that revealed just how far we have to go to raise women from oppression.

AGNES BOSANQUET
Agnes Bosanquet, Jayde Cahir, Gail Crimmins, Janet Free, Karina Luzia, Lilia Mantai and Ann Werner are, collectively, researchers/non-researchers, academics/non-academics, and mothers/ non-mothers from Australia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

ALISON BOUGHEY
Alison Boughey is CEO of the Australian Breastfeeding Association. Alison’s professional background includes an extensive amount of time working in women’s health – notably in the parent education department at the Mercy Hospital and then as CEO of Positive Women Victoria, who provide support and advocacy for women living with HIV.

NICOLE BRIDGES
Nicole Bridges is a full-time lecturer in public relations and has just completed her PhD at Western Sydney University, researching online social networking and breastfeeding support. She has over 25 years experience in the public relations field and has been a volunteer breastfeeding counsellor with the ABA since 2000.

SOPHIA BROCK
Dr Sophia Brock is President of AMIRCI and is interested in the experiences of mothers of children with disabilities, motherhood as hegemony, and how mothers construct their identities and relationships. She is a mother to her 2 year old daughter.

PETRA BUESKENS
Dr Petra Bueskens is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne, a psychotherapist in private practice, and a freelance opinion writer. Petra writes about motherhood, gender relations, social and political theory, basic income and psychotherapy in both scholarly and popular fora. Her books include Modern Motherhood and Women’s Dual Identities: Rewriting the Sexual Contract (Routledge 2018), the edited volume Motherhood and Psychoanalysis: Clinical, Sociological and Feminist Perspectives (Demeter, 2014), and two forthcoming edited volumes Nancy Chodorow: The Reproduction of Mothering: Forty Years On with Tanya Cassidy and Australian
Mothers: Historical and Sociological Perspectives with Carla Pascoe Leahy. Her opinion pieces have appeared in New Matilda, The Conversation, The Huffington Post, Arena Magazine and more.

MIRANDA BUCK

Miranda Buck, RN, BA(Hons), MPhil, IBCLC, PhD is a Lecturer in Nursing at La Trobe University and Manager of Breastfeeding Information and research at the Australian Breastfeeding Association. Her research work focusses on the transition to motherhood and infant feeding decision making.

REBECCA CODDINGTON

Dr Rebecca Coddington is a Registered Midwife with a PhD in Midwifery. She currently works as a Research Officer in the Centre for Midwifery, Child and Family Health, Faculty of Health at the University of Technology Sydney. She is the mother of two home-birthed children and a passionate advocate for improving women’s experiences of childbirth and the transition to motherhood.

HELENE CONNOR

Helene Connor (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Auckland. Her research is located within an interdisciplinary platform which includes gender studies, motherhood across socio-cultural contexts, constructions of identity and the intersections between gender, ethnicity and cultural representation.

EVA COX

Prof Cox AO is an influential Australian feminist, academic, public commentator, social and political researcher, and community change agent. She has worked as an academic, political adviser, public servant, and runs a small research and policy consultancy. A sociologist by trade, she promotes ideas widely and eclectically in books, online, in journals and other media. She is sociologist, researcher, AO and ABC Boyer Lecturer on A Truly Civil Society (1995), a fellow of the Centre for Policy Development, and a professorial fellow at Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning (UTS).

MARNIE CRUICKSHANK

Ms Marnie Cruickshank completed her Bachelor of Communication (Honours) from Brisbane’s Griffith University in 2018 and graduated with a Class I. Marnie intends to commence her doctorate in 2019 and looks forward to extending the concept of fleshly citizenship, and embodied political activisms.

EMMA DALTON

Emma Dalton is an Honorary Research Associate at La Trobe University. She has a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Honours) from Monash University, a Master of Arts (by Research) and a Doctor of Philosophy from the Theatre Program at La Trobe University. Emma writes about the representation of mothers in contemporary Australian female authored plays.

DARELLE DUNCAN

Darelle Duncan MEd is a long time feminist activist and had a career in education where she was a teacher, a union official, a school principal and a casual lecturer. She is one of the thousands of women who lost a child to adoption in the ‘baby scoop era’ and has long campaigned for recognition of the critical bond between mother and child. She is a passionate advocate for maternal rights to be recognised in national & international law.
TERESE EDWARDS

Since 2009 Terese has been an ambassador for single mothers affected by poverty hardship and/or domestic violence. Lodged the first individual complaint (CEDAW) accepted by the United Nations, screened a documentary giving voice to woman in hardship. Past Deputy President of ACOSS, a current PHD Candidature and holds an MPA.

DENISE FERRIS

Denise Ferris is an artist, who is the Head of the School of Art & Design at the Australian National University. Denise is currently Chair of the Australian Council of Art & Design Schools (ACUADS). Her photographs are in Australian public collections, including the National Gallery, National Library and the Australian War Memorial.

SITI ROHMANATIN FITRIANI

Siti Rohmanatin Fitriani is a trainer and researcher in the Ministry of Social Affairs of Indonesia. She worked with children and women experiencing violence in Papua Province by training the service provider and delivering direct services since 2009. She is now a PhD student at University of South Australia. Her research is about Papuan Parenting.

DEBORAH FOX

Dr Deborah Fox is a Lecturer in the Centre for Midwifery, Child and Family Health at the University of Technology Sydney. She is passionate about the capacity for midwifery care to support positive childbirth experiences for women, as a foundation of the transition to parenthood, breastfeeding and healthy maternal-infant attachment.

JANET FRASER

Janet Fraser is a poet, historian and National Convenor of the Australian homebirth network, Joyous Birth. She mothers two children and occupies an uneasy space as a feminist from way back bemused by recent developments. Her latest project is Despatches from The Matriarchy, an interactive subscription series on feminist theory and history, and personal growth.

ZOE FRENEY

Zoe Freney is an artist, writer and educator based in Adelaide. She is the Head of Art History & Theory at the Adelaide Central School of Art. She is a PhD candidate at the Australian National University, where her project investigates the creation of alternative representations of the mother.

JOAN GARVAN

Joan Garvan was awarded a doctorate in Sociology and Gender in 2010 by the Australian National University. She has worked as an Online Moderator at the ANU and lectured in Sociology. Since completing her studies Joan launched an internet site and offered online professional development courses [www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com](http://www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com) and a series of webinars for Nurses. She continues to work as an advocate for improved, 21st century, maternal and early years services.

AMY GILL

Amy Gill is a PhD candidate at Macquarie University’s Department of Educational Studies, investigating supports for young parents with an out-of-home care experience. Her other research interests include inter-agency collaboration, educational support for students in out-of-home care, and...
language development in early childhood. Amy’s background is in primary school teaching, and she has an 8-month old daughter.

MELISA GRAY-WARD

Melisa Gray-Ward is an Australian writer and mother living in Berlin since 2009. Her writing has been published in The Big Issue, i-D, Vice, Vestoj and more. Her podcast ‘Three Hands Full’ features conversations with creatives on the intersection of work and parenting, and debuts this International Women’s Day.

KARLEEN GRIBBLE

Karleen Gribble is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Western Sydney University. Her interests include infant feeding, children’s rights, attachment theory and trauma, and aspects of foster care and adoption. She is a mother to children via birth and adoption.

ALLEGRA HOLMES

Allegra Holmes is a current Masters of Fine Art candidate at the University of Sydney focusing on matricentric feminism and the anarchic maternal body. My art practice has played a central role in re-joining the parts of myself that patriarchy aims to keep divided. I actively reject the notion that the roles of mother and artist are mutually exclusive and have developed my art making practice as one that is intrinsically linked with the daily work of raising my children.

JENNIFER HOLMES

Jennifer Holmes is a current PhD candidate at La Trobe University with experience as a secondary and tertiary mathematics educator. Jennifer’s interest in parents’ abilities to assist with mathematics homework began as a teacher in a secondary school in the western suburbs of Melbourne and has continued throughout her career.

NICOLE JAMESON

Nicole Jameson is a Wollongong-based mother of four. While completing her Master of International Public Health she developed a keen interest in maternal and child health advocacy and worked as a research assistant in health policy before leaving the paid workforce to care for her growing family. Nicole has combined mothering with various volunteer roles including working as an activist for grassroots anti-sexism organisation Collective Shout and completing a Cert. IV in Breastfeeding Education (Counselling). She writes about breastfeeding and feminist motherhood at [https://fullcreamweb.blog](https://fullcreamweb.blog)

DIANA JEFFERIES

Dr Diana Jefferies is a senior lecturer in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Western Sydney University, Australia. She is a registered nurse with an academic background in the humanities. Her research examines historical and literary representations of mental illness after childbirth to investigate the cultural background of stigma.

MAEGAN JOHNSEN

Maegan Johnsen, MSW, is a social worker, feminist and non-residential mother who is passionate about combining advocacy and research to inform social work practice. Her current study explores the experiences of ten Australian non-residential mothers and brings their voices to the front and centre of a discussion about social work interventions with women who live apart from their children.
KATE JOHNSTON-ATAATA

Kate Johnston-Ataata is a Research Fellow (Sociology) at RMIT’s Centre of Social and Global Studies. Her research centres on understanding how people experience and make sense of reproduction, infertility, and reproductive health in the context of personal and family life and broader social and demographic change.

ANNA KERR

Anna Kerr is a practising lawyer and the Principal Solicitor of the Feminist Legal Clinic Inc. which works to advance the human rights of women and girls, including campaigning for recognition of maternal rights. She has qualifications in law, psychology, English and education and is a mother of four children.

RENATE KLEIN

Dr Klein is a long-term women’s health researcher and has written extensively on reproductive technologies and feminist theory over the last thirty years. A biologist and social scientist, she was Associate Professor in Women’s Studies at Deakin University in Melbourne. She is a co-founder of FINRAGE (Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering) and an original signatory to Stop Surrogacy Now. Her latest book is Surrogacy: A Human Rights Violation (2017).

RACHEL LEHNER-MEAR

Rachel Lehner-Mear is currently a doctoral researcher at the University of Nottingham School of Education (UK), following a twenty year career as a teacher. Her PhD work, gathering in-depth mother narratives, asks how mothers experience, negotiate and construct primary school homework and their role within it.

CINNAMON LINDSAY LATIMER (Ngāti Whatua, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi)

Cinnamon (Ngāti Whatua, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi) is an early career Kaupapa Māori researcher who has recently completed her Masters in Psychology. She is on the board of Ngā Māia ki Tāmaki Makarau (Māori Midwives Association) and Rainbow Youth. She has a passion for Indigenous and feminist research and has combined these interests within her postgraduate research projects.

CATHERINE LYNCH

Dr Catherine Lynch JD, adoptee and lawyer, is president of Adoptee Rights Australia Inc. Researching Australia’s history of child removal and its current expressions in child protection, adoption and surrogacy, her work foregrounds, not the users of adoption systems and reproductive technologies, but the people used or created by them.

VEE MALNAR (ANA KEY)

Vee Malnar (aka Ana Key) is a visual artist, singer-songwriter and playwright. She has produced 4 albums of music (Itunes) and won awards for songwriting. Her plays have won on numerous occasions at Crash Test and Short and Sweet, Sydney, including ‘Moonage Daydream’ directed by Tom Richards winning best overall production (2014). She has written one novel, and edited a poetry book, First Breath, on Pregnancy Birth and Motherhood, as well as an Art Therapy text book.

Vee’s previous work ‘Rock Chikz’ a staged musical (2005) became a short sit-com series and appeared on cable TV in New York (2012). The story revolved around a mother trying to be in an all girl band. She was one of the creators of Rhymes of Silence, a short play festival (2015), which explored stories
on domestic violence. Vee has also produced a number of short films and music videos and was events co-ordinator for Mamapalooza in Sydney for many years, helping to promote women in the arts.

She currently resides in Canberra and is working with her band the Underdogs, recording and doing live gigs. She also performs in a duo with Ann Brita Nilsson.

**LILIA MANTAI**

Agnes Bosanquet, Jayde Cahir, Gail Crimmins, Janet Free, Karina Luzia, Lilia Mantai and Ann Werner are, collectively, researchers/non-researchers, academics/non-academics, and mothers/ non-mothers from Australia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

**BARBARA MATTAR**

Barbara Mattar is a PhD candidate at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne, whose research explores the representation of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding in late twentieth century and early twenty-first century novels, in order to articulate distinct changes in the way newer fiction is engaging with preconceived ideas of maternity.

**JANET MEREWETHER**

Dr Janet Merewether is an award-winning Australian filmmaker. Her documentaries ‘Jabe Babe – A Heightened Life’, ‘Maverick Mother’, and ‘Reindeer in my Saami Heart’ have been nominated for numerous prizes and her films have been selected for the NY Film Festival, MoMA, and the Margaret Mead Festival. Janet completed her Doctorate at UTS on the subject of innovative hybrid documentary. She has lectured in the fields of Media and Design and is currently a research associate with the Department of History at the University of Sydney.

**ELLEN O’KEEFE**

Ellen O’Keeffe is the current president of Safe Motherhood for All Australia Inc. (SMFA). Ellen is a midwife who works in post-natal care and maternal and child health. Ellen has experience in health service planning and reproductive health education. Through Safe Motherhood for All Ellen hopes to see Australia rediscover pregnancy and birth as a family joy not as an illness to be treated; where all health professionals have a role in ensuring that they provide evidence based respectful care and that the women for whom they care, are empowered to be equal partners in this process.

**ANDREA O’REILLY**

Andrea O’Reilly, PhD, is Professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies at York University. O’Reilly is founder and director of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement, founder and editor-in-chief of the Journal of the Motherhood Initiative, and founder and publisher of Demeter Press. She is co-editor/editor 18 books including Mothers, Mothering and Motherhood Across Cultural Differences: A Reader (2014) and Academic Motherhood in a Post Second Wave Context: Challenges, Strategies, Possibilities (2012). O’Reilly is also author of Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart (2004), Rocking the Cradle: Thoughts on Motherhood, Feminism, and the Possibility of Empowered Mothering (2006) and Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, and Practice (2016). She is editor of the first Encyclopedia (3 Volumes, 705 entries) on Motherhood (2010). She is also author of more than 80 articles and 100 conference papers. She is a recipient of the CAUT Sarah Shorten Award for outstanding achievements in the promotion of the advancement of women in Canadian universities and colleges, is twice the recipient of York University’s “Professor of the Year Award” for teaching excellence and in 2014 was the first inductee into the Museum of Motherhood Hall of Fame.
CARLA PASCOE

Carla Pascoe is an Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow at the University of Melbourne and a Research Associate at Museum Victoria. Her research focuses on the histories and heritage of childhood, menstruation and motherhood in twentieth-century Australia. Her publications include *Spaces Imagined, Places Remembered: Childhood in 1950s Australia* (2011) and *Children, Childhood and Cultural Heritage* (2013) with Kate Darian-Smith. Her latest research project examines the history of becoming a mother in Australia from 1945 to the present.

ANNE-MAREE PAYNE

Anne Maree Payne currently works as a sessional academic and researcher in the Department of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney, where she teaches a range of equity-related subjects. She completed her PhD in 2016, “Untold Suffering? Motherhood and the Stolen Generations”. Her research interests lie primarily in the area of gender and human rights.

FIONA PLACE

Fiona Place has always been interested in women, language and identity. Her latest book *Portrait of the Artist’s Mother: Dignity, Creativity and Disability* examines the politics of disability and motherhood. Currently she combines her work as a writer with that of being an advocate for people with intellectual disabilities.

MARIE PORTER

In her PhD Marie concentrated on researching the experiences of Australian women who became first time mothers between 1950 and 1965. She was the driving force in beginning the Australian International conferences on mothering in 2001. Marie co-edited four books containing a selection of papers from these conferences. She had her thesis published and has presented at many conferences both here and overseas. Marie has had many papers published. She is the inaugural president of the Australian Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement and retired from that position in 2016. Last year Marie was awarded an Order of Australia for her contribution to education in the area of mothers and children. Marie is the proud Mother of 3, Grandmother of 6, and looking forward to another grandchild in October. Throughout her adult life she has actively supported mothers from diverse backgrounds, directly or indirectly, especially young mothers and those who have children with special needs.

CINDY RENATE

Cindy Renate is a feminist community builder working on a peer support program with women and their children who are navigating the long-term impacts of domestic and family violence. Using Intentional Peer Support (IPS) the group is working to support mothers as they create new social support networks to counter the social isolation so often experienced by women and their children living or recovering from domestic abuse as well practical supports such as food and meals, workplace training, and a facilitated children's program. The completed pilot is being evaluated for wider community implementation which would enable women trained as facilitators to set up their own groups in convenient locations supported by their local councils. She lives in the Dandenong Ranges, Melbourne, with her two, young unschooled daughters and many chickens.

LOUISE ROACH

Louise Roach has been a mother for 48 years and a grandmother for 20. She is glad that she was born in the early 1950s and not 1978 as was her younger daughter who is now the mother of a 6 year old and a 1 year old. The biggest support she received as a young mother and a mother in deep mourning, were those face to face, tangible, flesh and blood relationships within families and communities.
SALLY SAVAGE

Sally Savage is a PhD candidate at Monash University in the Faculty of Education. Sally’s research interests focus on mothering and music. A trained early years teacher and music specialist, Sally has worked in a variety of early childhood settings both in Australia and the UK and currently does relief teaching and sessional academic work.

JANE SCERRI

I am currently a PhD student at University of Western Sydney. As a single mother of two adult daughters, single motherhood and its attendant agency, is a subject that I am extremely passionate about. Since my daughters became young adults, I have been researching and writing about this topic. My second novel, The Verge, is a fictional account of a young woman’s transition to single motherhood. My MCA thesis: Considering the gap between theory and practice, examines female desire as represented in works of Helen Garner. in https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/4924/

VIRGINIA SCHMIED

Virginia Schmied is Professor of Midwifery in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Western Sydney University. Her research focuses on transition to motherhood, perinatal mental health, postnatal care, infant feeding decisions, and focusing on health systems, workplace culture and the facilitators and barriers to delivering high quality maternity care.

PRIA SCHWALL-KEARNEY

Pria Schwall-Kearney is a mother and respected folk musician who accompanies her singing with fiddle and clawhammer banjo. Specialising in the musics of the Appalachians and Quebec, she has performed and taught internationally and at home, playing and teaching at most major festivals across Australia.

RHONDA SHAW

Rhonda M. Shaw is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Wellington, New Zealand. Her research interests include the sociology of morality and ethics, gender and sexuality studies, and empirical research on assisted human reproduction, breastmilk sharing, and organ donation and transplantation

JOSEPHINE SIMONE

Josephine Simone is a Doctor of Business Administration student at Victoria University, in the early stages of her studies with prior work experience in Research and Consulting. She is a mother of four children and was a stay-at-home mother for 10 years, contemplating options to return to work.

ALEXANDRA SMITH

Dr Alexandra Smith is a mother, anthropologist, researcher and writer, breastfeeding counsellor and advocate, and a director of a large non-profit organisation. In all these roles, Alex maintains a focus on women’s and children’s fundamental right to health throughout their lives, and on understanding and dismantling barriers to achieving this.

CAITLIN STILL

Caitlin Still is a third-year PhD candidate in the Department of English at the University of Sydney. She currently completing a thesis on literary representations of the maternal throughout Australian history.
LARA SWEENEY

Lara Sweeney is an undergraduate at the Australian National University, majoring in Sociology and Anthropology. In 2018 Lara undertook a research internship with Dr Katherine Carroll, Dr Debbie Noble Carr and Dr Catherine Waldby on their Australian Research Council Discovery project, ‘Lactation after loss in contemporary motherhood and health service delivery’.

VIRGINIA THORLEY

Dr Virginia Thorley is an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at the University of Queensland. She also practices as a Lactation Consultant. Her research interests span a number of areas of cultural/medical history relating to mothering.

REBECCA VANDYK

Rebecca Vandyk is a community artist with a background in Education and Psychology, currently in the final stages of a Masters degree in Public Health, and establishing an Art in Healthcare organisation in Gippsland, Victoria. She is the Melbourne representative for the Arts Health Early Career Researchers Network.

THI THO VU

Thi Tho Vu is currently a PhD candidate at Western Sydney University. Prior to conducting her research in social sciences at WSU, Thi Tho completed Master of Philosophy at Hanoi National University, Vietnam (2009-2012) where she also studied Bachelor of Philosophy (2003-2007). She is interested in exploring the role of culture in the production and reproduction of inequality in Vietnamese society where Confucian has significant influence. Her ongoing research is concerned with the lives of single mothers with the purpose of investigating the experiences of those women in contemporary Vietnam.

CATHERINE WALSH

Catherine Walsh is a Sydney writer who has published in Meanjin, Sydney Morning Herald and Hoopla. She blogged about maternal feminism at Motherhugger.com. She has previously presented at AMIRCI on the birth of maternal feminism, the Sydney Mamapalooza festivals, and on the inequalities propped up by volunteering.

CHARMAIGNE WELDON

I am an Aboriginal woman originating from the Wailwan/Kamilaroi Nation. I have lived and worked in Sydney for the past 26 years, dedicating over 20 years of my career in the fight against Domestic and Family violence and for women’s rights.

There is a shared experiences and personal experiences that provided me with knowledge, strengths, courage to empower women to be fearless and enforce action in their life and breaking down the silence to end violence.

A firm advocate on self-determination, reflecting the United Nations Declarations on the rights of Indigenous People and firm proclaimed feminist working for the empowerment of women in breaking down the entrenched barriers facing Aboriginal people in our communities.

LEAH WILLIAMS VEAZEY

Leah Williams Veazey is a feminist sociologist with research interests in migration, motherhood, and digital cultures. She was recently awarded her PhD in Sociology from The University of Sydney for her thesis, *Navigating the Intersections of Migration and Motherhood in Online Communities: Digital Community Mothering and Migrant Maternal Imaginaries.*
RACHEL WILLIAMSON

Rachel Williamson is a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies at the University of Canterbury. Her research looks at contemporary literary and popular culture texts by mothers to consider the emergence of a ‘maternal aesthetics’ capable of reshaping text forms and genre. She has worked in secondary and tertiary institutions as a teacher and tutor.

EMILY WOLFINGER

Emily Wolfinger is a PhD candidate and an experienced researcher and writer. For nearly five years, she worked as publications manager for leading social research company, McCrindle Research. During her time there she co-authored three books and headed multiple research projects of which key findings were published and broadcast by a wide range of media. Emily is currently teaching and lecturing in the areas of family violence, families and intimate life, and community and social action in the School of Social Sciences & Psychology at Western Sydney University. She is also undertaking an APA-funded PhD at Southern Cross University, exploring online user perceptions of sole mother poverty and welfare in Australia.