

When feminist ideas are hijacked: How the demand for men to take up child care responsibilities impacts formal child care policy.

Second wave feminists called for a more equal and just society. They demanded the recognition of issues that were traditionally off the political agenda – so called women’s issues – from domestic violence, contraception and access to safe abortion to affordable quality child care.

Today policy discussions about issues that directly impact women’s lives are carefully couched in gender-neutral language. The impact of policy on women’s lives is rendered invisible by the disappearance of ‘women’ into ‘people’, ‘parents’ and ‘families’. Formal child care policy is an example of a public policy that continues to resolutely ignore the different lives of men and women.

This paper presents qualitative data gathered from women in northern regional Australia, interviewed in two research studies in 2007 and 2009/10. Women spoke of their search for quality long day care in a complex and rapidly changing child care landscape. From this data we argue that child care is no longer seen as a women’s issue, diverting the public gaze from women’s very real struggles in this so-called time of ‘choice’ and equality. Was this what feminists called for when we demanded men share the responsibility of raising children?

Ryl Harrison

3-C1

James Cook University

Telling Lies to Little Girls: Motherhood, Girlhood and Identity

Young girls and their mothers have been the focus of ongoing public debate about the sexualisation of children within popular culture. This paper will present the preliminary findings of critical feminist qualitative research exploring Australian women’s experiences in mothering girls aged between 9 and 13 years.

The title of this paper, ‘Telling Lies to Little Girls’, reflects the complex social landscape that women negotiate when bringing up girls in a post-feminist world where it is assumed that disadvantage for women and girls no longer exists. Two significant issues emerged from the women’s stories: sexuality and body image. Social fault lines have appeared between ‘how things are’ and ‘what should be’. Women are negotiating these fault lines with their daughters; simultaneously trying to hold emancipatory visions in what they are describing as a hostile social context.

Barbara Hartley

1-D3

University of Tasmania

The Demonisation of the Mother in Japanese Literary Narrative

The mother as demon trope has a strong presence in Japanese literary expression. This paper examines the representation of “evil” mothers in a selection of writing from twentieth century women’s narrative in Japan.

The paper commences with a demon mother from a work by a writer now marginalised for her extreme right wing views, Sono Ayako (b. 1931). In *Evanesance* (1959), Sono creates a mother whose sleeping quarters are attached to those of her son and his mentally unbalanced wife in order to call the young man to her bedside at night. In *Masks* (1958), iconic novelist, Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986), presents a mother who engineers the circumstances that will lead to the death of her twin boy and girl in order to wreak revenge on the long dead father of her offspring. While less confronting, the mother of the young pregnant protagonist in *Woman Running Through the Mountains* (1980), by Tsushima Yûko (b.1947), attempts to force her reluctant daughter to abort her child. The paper will draw on the work of Luce Irigaray