



Centre for Parenting
Culture Studies

CPCSForums@Kent
Spring 2013

These events are designed as a space for colleagues in and around Kent to come together to discuss parenting culture. We hope that they will foster some interesting cross-disciplinary conversation, and lead to collaborative events in the future. All are welcome, so please spread the word!

(1) Open Lecture with Joan Wolf: all welcome

'Is Breast Really Best? Breastfeeding, Motherhood, and the Politics of Care'

Date: Wednesday February 13th 2013

Venue: Grimond Lecture Theatre, University of Kent

Time: Lecture starts 6pm, drinks available afterwards

This talk will review the central arguments of *Is Breast Best? Taking on the Breastfeeding Experts and the New High Stakes of Motherhood*, examine how academics and the public have reacted to its publication, and then pose some broad questions about what the book and its reception tell us about carework in the twenty-first century. *Is Breast Best?* asks why, when the scientific evidence for breastfeeding's health benefits is weak, virtually everyone seems convinced that breastfeeding is the most important gift a mother can bestow on her baby. It argues that the rather dramatic misrepresentation of breastfeeding results from a convergence of three forces: neoliberalism and a cultural obsession with reducing risk, especially health risks; the methods and routines of observational science, particularly breastfeeding research; and an ideology of total motherhood that stipulates that a mother can and should eliminate any risk to her children, regardless of how small or likely the risk or what the cost is to her own wellbeing in the process. *Is Breast Best?* elicited a range of responses, from those that engaged seriously with its ideas to those, far more numerous, that claimed the book was ignorant and part of a larger feminist assault on motherhood. While both *Is Breast Best?* and the reaction it provoked reveal much about public discourse on breastfeeding, they also raise critical questions about how neoliberalism, the dynamics of science, and an ethic of total motherhood combine to create a moral framework that limits our ability to think constructively about contemporary carework more broadly defined.



CPCSForums@Kent
Autumn 2012

(2) Dr. Anna Strthn

Wednesday 20th March 3-5pm

Location: Cornwallis NW SR 4

The Faithful Child: Evangelicals and the Formation of Children in Modern Britain

British evangelicals have traditionally devoted attention and resources to adolescents and students, but in recent years childhood and parenting have increasingly become sites of anxiety in relation to the perceived threats of a dominant secular, liberal society. This is reflected, for example, in church-run parenting courses and manuals, evangelicals' involvement in national campaigns on issues such as the sexualisation of childhood, and an increase in religiously-informed home schooling. In this context, this study seeks to examine how evangelical Christians in Britain today understand childhood, as well as the processes through which they seek to form children as faithful believers across contexts ranging from national campaigns to everyday family, church and school life. This research will form part of a small, but growing literature on the study of childhood and religion, adding to our knowledge of how some communities seek to maintain religious commitment across generations against a backdrop of greater detachment from religion amongst younger age cohorts in Britain. In this CPCS Forum, I will discuss the theoretical background, key research questions and methodology of the study.