

**Feminism and the Politics of Childhood: Friends or foes?**

*Workshop at the UCL Institute of Education, London, 16-17th November 2015*

***Call for papers***

This workshop will bring together community- and university-based academics and activists to unpack perceived conflicts between children’s interests and women’s interests (which themselves are heterogeneous) and, more broadly, intersections and antagonisms between various forms of feminism and the politics of childhood.

The lives of women and children are deeply entangled and the way relations between them are conceptualised has implications for approaches to service provision, public education, and social movement building about critical issues including childcare, domestic work and global care chains, familial violence, and the division of labour. Children, to varying degrees, are positioned as primarily dependent and in need of care, and women take by far the greatest responsibility for this, whether in families, education, formal care settings, global care chains, and so on. Women and children have often been elided or linked ideologically. Both feminist and childhood scholars and activists have worked against this conflation, but, in so doing, have been criticised for portraying women and children’s interests as opposing and adversarial (Thorne, 1987). Feminist scholars have argued that prioritising children’s rights has led to increases in women’s ascribed responsibilities for children’s wellbeing (Molyneux, 2006; Newberry, 2014) and that rising attention to ‘the child’ in the policy arena has side-lined women’s citizenship demands (Dobrowolsky and Jenson, 2004). Childhood theorists have commented that feminism is an ‘adultist’ enterprise, rendering children largely absent from the social world and sociological consideration except as objects of social reproduction (Mayall, 2002). Concerns have been raised that this antagonism reduces the complexity of adult-child relations – which include joy, love, reciprocal concern, and solidarity – solely to that of work and burden (Riley, 1987).

Until now, there has been limited attention to the ways these perceived antipathies might be addressed (but see Alanen, 1994; Burman, 2008; Oakley, 1994; Thorne, 1987). We propose to use this workshop as a means to initiate such a dialogue. We are inviting abstracts which address the following, or other relevant, themes:

* How do we ensure the well-being of children *and* women, particularly in contexts where their interests may (appear to) be in conflict?
* How might a conversation between feminism and the politics of childhood reconcile these tensions?
  + Are women’s and children’s interests necessarily opposed or inevitably linked?
  + What are the consequences of denaturalizing motherhood and childhood for women and children?
  + How do we conceptualise women and children’s involvement in creating a gendered and generationed social order?
* What are the implications of theorising women and children together?
  + Does discussing women and children together reify their relationship?
  + Where do men, the state, and society fit?
  + To what extent does this reinforce compulsory heterosexuality?

To promote in-depth discussion and debate, workshop spaces will be limited to a small number of presenters and participants. Working papers of no more than 4000 words will be pre-circulated. At the workshop, each presenter will give a short synopsis which will be followed by discussion. We anticipate producing an edited volume from the workshop. All participants (including presenters) will be charged a nominal fee of £20.

**To apply to present:** Please send titles and abstracts of no more than 250 words to r.rosen@ioe.ac.uk by 15th August 2015(Subject line: PRESENTER Feminism and Childhood). Full papers will be due 26th October 2015.

**To apply to participate:** If you wish to participate in the workshop as a non-presenter, please submit an expression of interest of no more than 250 words outlining relevant academic and/or community-based experience to r.rosen@ioe.ac.uk by 30th September 2015(Subject line: PARTICIPANT Feminism and Childhood).

*Hosted by the Childhood and Gender Stream (Social Science Research Unit) and Gender and Sexuality Studies, UCL.*