Mothering the Crises: An exploration of the experiences of mothers working from home in the first national U.K. ‘lockdown’ during the Covid-19 pandemic

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Trigger Warning
There will be brief discussion death, bereavement, and grief due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

ICRI-HASS Conference
2-4 June 2021
Overview

1. Introduction to MA Dissertation

2. Conceptual Debates
   ‘Reproductive Labour’ vs/or ‘Care’

3. Analysis of Qualitative Data
   Three forms of lockdown specific reproductive labour and responsibilities

‘Reproductive Labour’ vs/or ‘Care’

- Social Reproduction Theory Framework
  Labour Lens
  Crisis Focused

  “the activities and attitudes, behaviours and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis,...include(s) various kinds of work-mental, manual, and emotional...to reproduce the next generation.” (382-383)
Reproductive Labour: Home-schooling

“Each week her school sent an intense home-schooling timetable, but I probably manage to do an hour each day, I know it’s not good enough, it should take priority...it all depends on my work load. I worry that I am making her fall behind.” – Sunita.

“There are a lot of families who seem to be productively using lockdown as the time to learn new skills, like languages and instruments, I didn’t want the pressure of this.” – Gemma.

Reproductive Labour: Emotional Labour

“I think as mums, it’s our job to keep things together and everything going in the home. But I just absolutely fell apart, after the death of my nephew to COVID-19 in the first week of lockdown...I was so worried about my mum grieving for her grandson on her own too, I usually support her emotionally as her carer. My husband had to take over with our daughters and do a different side of my job as a mum he has never noticed before...absorbing their worries...he has a new appreciation for some of the stuff us mums do behind the scenes.” – Joyce.
Reproductive Labour: Lockdown Management

“I used to make my husband take all his clothes off at the door when he returned from work to minimise the risk. I was like the household supervisor *laughs*. I also found and bought all the medication we would need if any of us got the virus, because I knew that we couldn’t go into hospital, unless it was serious... I would have to manage it, and treat it at home. – Gemma

“I feel like the government are expecting mums to make a lot of the hard decisions in this crisis... we get blamed for stuff a lot more. If anyone got ill...I would feel as if that was my fault and other people would think it too” – Emily

Key Points

1. The collapse of the political economy of social reproduction due to the Covid-19 pandemic impacted mothers’ reproductive labour and responsibilities whilst WFH during lockdown

2. Particularly, increasing the volume, variety, and responsibility to complete reproductive labour for mothers


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Feel free to contact me if you have any further comments or questions about my research etc.

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Bibliography


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