Migrant Mothers Caring for the Future: 
Creative interventions in making new citizens

Seminar 1: Citizenship, Migration and Mothering

Friday 22 November 2013
10.00am-4.30pm
Open University (London regional office)
1-11 Hawley Crescent
Camden Town
London NW1 8NP
Map and directions: http://www3.open.ac.uk/contact/maps.aspx?contactid=1

This seminar will theorize and discuss the policy implications of migrant mothers' citizenship

10:30 Welcome and Introduction to the Networking Project

10:45 - 12.15: Session 1
Umut Erel and Tracey Reynolds: Migrant mothers caring for the future
Isabell Dyck: Migrant mothers, human capital and citizenship: hidden care

12:15-13:15 Lunch

13:15-14:45 Session 2
Tine Brouckaert: Undocumented mothers on the national stage.
Ronit Lenin: A migrant died: Abortion and the politics of motherhood in Ireland

14:45-15:00 Break and refreshments

15:00-16:00 Roundtable: policy implications of migrant mothers’ citizenship
  o Rosalind Bragg (Maternity Alliance)
  o Donn Flynn (Migrants Right Network)
  o Luljeta Nuzi (Sphresa Programme)

16:15 Concluding thoughts and close
Seminar convenors: Dr Umut Erel (CCIG, Open University) and Professor Tracey Reynolds (Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU)

This event is free but spaces are limited to 50 delegates. To reserve a place email Kerry.Lawrence@open.ac.uk by 12 November 2013

For further details of this networking event visit
http://weekscentreforsocialandpolicyresearch.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/summer-newsletter-20131.pdf
http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/events/migrant-mothers-caring-for-the-future

Unfortunately the planned keynote ‘Different perspectives on Citizenship, Migration and Mothering in Migration Law’ by Sarah van Walsum had to be cancelled due to health reasons.

Abstracts and biographies

Undocumented mothers on the national stage.

Tine Brouckaert

Undocumented persons are juridical excluded from citizenship. However because of their embodiment that often differs the masculine white norm, they are also socially and culturally excluded from citizenship. Although, through their reproductive status as a mother their political citizenship is ambivalent and contested (hooks 1990; Kershaw 2010; 2011). This paper addresses their response to so-called “niches” (Nicholls 2013) in citizenship discourses and legal categories, setting the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In their aim to obtain a legal residence permit, I consider here their “becoming mother” an active and political act of citizenship.

This paper draws from a longitudinal in-depth ethnographic fieldwork with ten undocumented migrant mothers. The case studies are composed of a heterogeneous group of women of color in terms of age, class, national and ethnic belongings, in order to primarily focus on the role of undocumented status, gender and identity as a mother rather than to focus upon national, cultural or ethnical belonging. This paper builds upon the post-migration routes of some of the key participants to this research. Responses of undocumented women towards the legal framework seemed to arise from their most intimate sphere and applied to the reproductive dimension of their embodiedness. Confronted by citizenship discourses, ensuring the communities coherence by excluding and including forms of kinship, the women engendered an embodied fictive maternal identity (Butler 1999: 417). It is in the imitation of this figure that enable them to become subjects. I
here claim their action as a temporal social constructed identity that attest political citizenship potential.

**Dr Tine Brouckaert** has a PhD in Comparative Sciences of Culture at the Ghent University and the University of Saint-Etienne. Her dissertation “Giving Birth to Citizenship” (original: Accoucher la citoyenneté. Expériences et témoignages de femmes sans-papiers à propos de leur travail maternel) addresses questions on mothering with an undocumented citizenship status. Her research interests are critical citizenship studies, mothering, anthropology of gender and diversity, postcolonial and feminist studies.

**Migrant mothers, human capital and citizenship: hidden care**

**Isabel Dyck**

In this paper I reflect upon the hidden contribution to a nation’s developing citizenry through the translation of different forms of capital in broadly conceived acts of care by migrant mothers. Focusing primarily on the home and, through its extension into the neighbourhood, I examine how sites of capital transformation are coded ‘domestic’ yet are integrally involved in a wider ‘place-making’. Drawing on qualitative data from a set of studies with migrant women from different sending countries and living in different neighbourhoods in a major Canadian city, the paper comments on how negotiation and translation of cultural and emotional capital in the course of quotidian life results in the transformation of cultural identities, bodies, and place identities as immigrants strive to ‘belong’. These transformations illustrate the intertwining of immigrant status and the local in ways that question the utility of the common orientation in immigration policy of restricting the notion of human capital with economic potential in labour markets and its inherent gendered assumptions. Further, the paper supports other work that notes the fragmented meaning of ‘citizenship’ according to scale, as city, nation-state and transnational identifications collide.

**Professor Isabel Dyck** is a social and feminist geographer and a member of the Health, Place and Society research theme. She taught at the University of British Columbia prior to joining the School of Geography at Queen Mary in 2005. Her work has contributed to the development of health and feminist geography, theoretically and through methodological innovation. Her main current research interests concern the provision of long-term care in the home and various issues related to immigration and resettlement. Gender and generational differences in relation to immigration experiences provide a particular focus. Recent projects use the lens of therapeutic landscapes from health geography to examine immigrant women’s re-making of home and to investigate the continuities and transformations of health practices through processes of migration. This research has been conducted in Vancouver, Canada, and London. In addition to gaining insight into how place, culture and health practices interweave dynamically, this work shows the centrality of the materiality and meanings of ‘home’ in how health is defined and managed. A range of qualitative methods has been used in these studies, including film.

**Migrant Mothers Caring for the Future**
Dr. Umut Erel and Prof Tracey Reynolds

We will explore how migrant mothers realise and problematise their role in bringing up future citizens in modern Western societies, increasingly characterised by ethnic, racial, religious, cultural and social diversity. In the UK context cultural, social and policy debates identify that the challenge for the future is to form a culturally diverse, yet socially cohesive, citizenry, through sustainable multicultural modes of conviviality. We will discuss the processes that shape migrant mothers’ cultural and caring work in enabling their children to occupy a place as future citizens.

Although the family is itself changing and a gender-neutral language of parenting is emerging in the UK, it is still overwhelmingly mothers who care for children. Theoretical accounts of the inter-relationship between motherhood and nationhood position mothers as symbols of the nation who reproduce the group. Thus, mothers are tasked, sometimes in contradictory ways, with safeguarding national continuity, whilst also shaping change in the face of the challenges of the new, in particular increasing ethnic diversity. While policy often problematizes migrant mothers, questioning whether they can help their children to properly integrate, we reframe the debate. We think that migrant mothers are already contributing to UK society by bringing up children here. Instead, we ask what we can learn for social theory and policy by understanding the caring, cultural and social practices of migrant women as interventions into citizenship. By understanding how migrant mothers envisage their futures, how can we rethink plural ethnic identities of citizens. We also look at how these issues are raised in current policy on immigration, and how current politics of austerity affect migrant mothers.

Umut Erel is lecturer in Sociology at the Open University. Her research interests are in migration, ethnicity, gender and class, culture and representation empirically and theoretically. She is interested in how these issues play out in practices of citizenship, differentiated along gender and ethnic lines. She currently undertakes, with Prof. Tracey Reynolds (LSBU) an AHRC funded networking activity on migrant mothers’ citizenship and participatory theatre ‘Migrant Mothers Caring for the Future’. She is chair of Milton Keynes Council’s Commission on Ethnic Diversity of Children’s and Families Partnership, assessing how Black and Minority Ethnic Families access local services. Recent publications include Migrant Women Transforming Citizenship. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009; ‘Reframing Migrant Mothers as Citizens’, Citizenship Studies Nov. 2011; ‘Gendering Transnational Cultural Capital’ European Journal of Women’s Studies, November 2012; ‘Kurdish Mothers in London Enacting Citizenship’ Citizenship Studies Special Issue on Reproducing Citizens, December 2013.

Tracey Reynolds is Research Professor and Acting Head of Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, London South Bank University (LSBU). Tracey began her academic career in 1998 in the Faculty of Arts Humanities and Science, LSBU shortly after completing her PhD in Sociology here. Tracey’s teaching and research interests focus on transnational families and kinship networks; constructions of motherhood and parenting & youth studies, and she has established international recognition within these fields of expertise. She has conducted extensive empirical research in the UK across a range of social issues including black and

A migrant died: Abortion and the politics of motherhood in Ireland

Dr Ronit Lenin

The death in hospital of 17 weeks pregnant Indian dentist Savita Halappanavar in October 2012, rekindled Ireland’s long standing abortion debate. Locating her case in the politics of birth in Ireland, this paper situates Halappanavar’s story firstly within Ireland’s gendered birthing politics, where women are cast as m/others, and secondly within the briefer history of casting migrant women’s birthing practices as threatening the integrity of Irish citizenship. The paper makes two claims. Firstly, I argue that migrant m/others are the female version of Giorgio Agamben’s ‘bare life’, or homo sacer – femina sacra – she whose life can be taken by the sovereign racial state. Secondly, after Eithne Luibheid, I propose that the casting of migrant m/others as disrupting Irish national integrity originates from an unquestioned heteronormativity and white privilege, and that migrant m/others, in 'childbearing against the state', consolidate rather than disrupt Irish nationhood.


Don Flynn has worked in the field of migration policy since the mid-1970s, when he started work as a caseworker at a London law centre. Since then he has worked as policy officer for the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, a national legal rights organisation. He currently leads the Migrants’ Rights Network, which works to improve networking between migrant and refugee community
organisations and other civil society organisations working to support the rights of all migrants. He is also involved in networking with migrants’ rights organisations across Europe, currently serving at the Chair of PICUM – the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants. He chairs the steering group of the UK Race & Europe Network (UKREN). UKREN brings together groups concerned with racial equality in the UK with an interest in monitoring and influencing development in the rest of Europe. He regularly writes on themes relating to the politics of immigration and blogs on the MRN website, (www.migrantsrights.org.uk). He tweets on @donflynmmrn.

**Luljeta Nuzi** is the founder of Shpresa Programme an user led organization that works to promote the integration of the Albanian community here in UK (mainly mothers and children). She believes on integration with dignity and not assimilation and as has chosen as vehicles to achieve this, the social entrepreneur and community organizing movements. Shpresa works in partnership with a range of organization especially mainstream school and specialized organization such as WTC and Solace to address specific issues such as mental health and domestic violence. Luljeta is a strong believer that everyone coming to this country have skill to offer and should be encouraged and supported to overcome difficulties that they are facing at first, create a stimulating environment for them so they can play and active role in community and contribute to society.