

Motherhood, Mothering and (Feminist) IR

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Feminists have long grappled with, and been troubled by, the experience and concept of motherhood. Rightly critiqued by feminists as an essentialising and limiting abstraction, the figure of 'The Mother' has been lazily deployed in patriarchal societies to curtail women's full inclusion across social, political, economic, and cultural institutions. With respect to the discipline of IR, for all its 'turns' to embodiment and 'the everyday', to what extent does it account for the lived realities of having children and raising families, as well as the thorny questions of who does what? Who gets what? Who carries what burden and for how long? And how does, and should, any of this translate into research, teaching, and citizenship in a department?

Set against the backdrop of the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on academic mothers; a crisis in child-care provision in the UK and beyond; and an increasingly precarious HE sector, particularly for ECRs and those most likely to have/be thinking about starting families, this roundtable asks what mothering – broadly conceived – means for/to international studies as a discipline, and for feminists within the discipline both materially and conceptually. Does motherhood/mothering shape (feminist) IR? To what extent does feminist IR confront the challenges and potentials of mothering, particularly in relation to the experience of mothering through different – racialised, classed, sexualised – bodies, as well as how mothering/motherhood changes through life? How might the experience of mothering challenge existing feminisms in the discipline? This roundtable is intended as an opportunity to discuss and grapple with questions animating our professional lives and shaping our engagement in/with the discipline.

Track Classification: Gendering International Relations Working Group