

Institution: University of Warwick
Unit of Assessment: 30 History
Title of case study: Health, Well-Being and the Family in Modern Britain
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Research in Warwick's Centre for the History of Medicine (CHM) provides much needed historical perspective for current debates about well-being and the family. In uncovering a longer history of the influence of psycho-social thinking on health, it offers comparative insight and potential lessons, and tempers contemporary anxieties about 'toxic childhood', the changing role of fathers, and the politics of childcare and maternity. Through the creative arts and broadcast media, our research connects to public debate on understandings of well-being, parenting and the changing nature of childhood. The research has informed policy discussions on children, young people and family services, and has influenced the ideas and practices of professionals in the third sector.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) CHM research has argued that the barriers between physical, mental, and social health were already being eroded by the early twentieth century. By this time, psychological well-being and self-management were integral aspects of health, everyday life, popular culture and identity. Our scholarship has also opened up new avenues of exploration on 'mental welfare' and 'mental hygiene', childhood, youth and home life, and the popularisation of psychological thought and practice amongst individuals, families and communities.</p> <p>In her research on the relationship between mental disorder and childbirth in Victorian Britain (<i>Dangerous Motherhood</i>, 2004), Hilary Marland (1996-present) concludes that puerperal insanity marked the creation of a new category of mental disorder, which invites reconsideration of the ideals of maternity, domestic ideology and the role of women in the family. Mathew Thomson (1998-present) has demonstrated that the early twentieth century witnessed a new interest in mental disability, which related to emerging concerns about 'mental welfare' throughout society and that the response in this area was far greater than hitherto recognised. Crucially, it included the creation of a range of voluntary organisations, the provision of community care, and the transmission of responsibility for mental well-being into the hands of the family, parents and the individual. His 2006 monograph, <i>Psychological Subjects</i>, explored the popularisation of psychological thinking in twentieth-century Britain up to the 1970s. This is regarded by historians of medicine and social policy as a landmark study on the role of psychology in shaping everyday life in a much earlier period than previously recognised. The historical focus on psychoanalysis has obscured the persistence of a type of popular psychological culture which had strong links to nineteenth-century ideas of self-help and social responsibility, and which was manifested in public enthusiasm for psychology as a practical tool within regimes of personal improvement.</p> <p>In recent research, Marland and Thomson have developed their enquires into the popularisation of psychological thought and practice through a particular focus on children and young people. Marland's <i>Health and Girlhood in Britain, 1874-1920</i> (2013) argued that an increasing emphasis on the self-management of well-being, which included an important mental health dimension, was behind a new conceptualisation of girlhood. Thomson's <i>Lost Freedom</i> (2013) examines the implications of child psychology for the way in which adults re-conceptualised child well-being from the Second World War to the 1970s, in the face of new challenges, including increased traffic, the visual landscape of television, and new debates around child sexual abuse and paedophilia.</p> <p>Attention to the popularisation of psychological theory within the locus of the family is extended to motherhood in the work of Davis and King. Davis uses oral testimony to understand contemporary experiences of motherhood in twentieth-century Britain. Her monograph <i>Modern Motherhood</i> (2012) demonstrates that there has been less change over the past fifty years in parenting advice than commentators have claimed, and that advice to parents has been historically contradictory and confusing. This work is complemented by King's path-breaking research which reveals that fatherhood was invested with a greater significance in mid-twentieth-century Britain than has been recognised previously. King has argued (2012) that fatherhood took on a growing importance, as the psychological and physical well-being of children was further placed on parents' shoulders. This research reinforces Thomson's claims in <i>Psychological Subjects</i> that psychological advice on childrearing became particularly influential on policymakers and the public at large in the aftermath</p>

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of the war. Together, these projects offer much needed historical perspective for current debates about crises of parenting, child well-being and mental health care.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Key Research Outputs

Davis, A., *Modern Motherhood: Women and Family in England c. 1945-2000* (Manchester University Press, 2012). [REF2]

King, L., 'Hidden Fathers? The Significance of Fatherhood in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain', *Contemporary British History*, 26:1 (2012), 25-46.

Marland, H., *Dangerous Motherhood: Insanity and Childbirth in Victorian Britain* (Palgrave, 2004).

Marland, H., *Health and Girlhood in Britain, 1874-1920* (Palgrave, 2013). [REF2]

Thomson, M., *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

Thomson, M., *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford University Press, 2013). [REF2]

Evidence of Quality:

Dangerous Motherhood was described as 'a highly interesting and rich piece of historical research which engages successfully with a number of scholarly debates currently shaping histories of medicine ... Marland achieves a fine cultural history of gender and insanity': *Social History of Medicine*, 18:3 (2005), 512-513. Thomson's *Psychological Subjects* was the focus of a symposium held in Oxford (2007), organised by the British Psychological Society. This work demonstrated 'an extraordinarily impressive range and intellectual command of its materials': *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 82:1 (2008), 218-219. 'No historian of psychological ideas and practice in Britain, or those broadly interested in the self and the democratic subject in modern industrial society, can afford to ignore this major work': *Twentieth Century British History*, 19:4 (2008), 530-532. *Modern Motherhood* was deemed 'an important contribution to post-war historiography and the field of women's history ... it challenges some of the socially constructed, expert-driven assumptions about motherhood during this period': *Twentieth Century British History* (advanced access, 19.03.13)

Research Awards:

Hilary Marland, Wellcome Trust University Award, 'Puerperal Insanity in the Nineteenth Century', 1996-2001, £135,948.

Hilary Marland, AHRB Research Leave, 'Dangerous Motherhood: Insanity and Childbirth in Nineteenth-Century Britain', 2002, £9,026.

Mathew Thomson, AHRB Research Leave, 'Psychological Subjects: The Making of Psychological Identities in Britain, c.1900-1950', 2000, £7,733.

Angela Davis, Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship, 'Motherhood c.1970-1990: An Oral History', 2008-10, £37,290.

Angela Davis, British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship, 'Healthy Bodies and Healthy Minds: The Health and Welfare of Pre-School Children', 1939-1979, 2010-13, £229,680, supplement 2011-13, £2,023.

Laura King, Wellcome Trust Conference Support 'Understanding Parenting: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives', 2012, £3,500.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The Centre's research on the psycho-social well-being of individuals and the family in modern Britain has informed Department for Education policy discussions about early year's intervention, child rights and support for families at a time when child and family well-being has become a major domestic issue linked to the 'Big Society' agenda and the Children and Families Bill. Through stakeholder workshops, the CHM's research on parenting in the twentieth century has informed the ideas and practices of social care professionals and third sector organisations in child services, adoption, foster care and family support. Public events and the media have been used to stimulate public discourse on the changing role of parents and the impact of modern society on childhood development.

Informing policy and professional practice

The significance of Thomson's research is evidenced by an invitation to participate in two

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Department for Education policy seminars on children, young people and families (November 2011). Both meetings were attended by 50+ delegates, many of whom were DfE civil servants but also policymakers and representatives from UNESCO and Save the Children. Thomson's reappraisal of child rights and well-being in post-war Britain offered policymakers and stakeholders an important historical context to better understand the background to current policies and policy questions. Civil servants acknowledged the value of Thomson's 'thought-provoking observations' which raised 'interesting notions to think about in making policy' and made them 'questions things we had taken for granted'. The seminar briefings were recorded for wider dissemination by the DfE to inform professional practice in children, young people and family services, and published on the *History & Policy* website. King and Davis' research brought new historical perspectives to policymakers debating contemporary issues of paternity leave, child custody, maternity care and the restoration of family values. King's research on 'active fatherhood' in Britain, published with *History & Policy* (13.06.12; 900 views), informed policymakers and public audiences of the dangers of allowing outdated stereotypes of parental roles to influence policy making. Davis' article on maternity care since 1948 (*History & Policy*, 23.05.13; 295 views) encouraged policymakers to ensure good interpersonal relationships between women and maternity/medical staff. Her piece on 'The Part of the Family' (*OpenDemocracy*, 19.10.12) generated public discussion via online comments about the coalition government's approach to family policy.

The researchers informed the professional ideas of stakeholders and third-sector organisations in child care and parenting at two workshops (family support workers, medical practitioners, national children's charities, and local authority service-providers). In June 2010 Thomson organised a workshop with the Child Care History Network—'Child Care Archives: Raising the Questions'—attended by Action for Children, Barnardos, the Care Leavers Association, the Association of Child Abuse Lawyers, and local authority and private service providers. This provided a forum for knowledge exchange and dialogue on improving practices in record-keeping and archiving child care documents, such as the creation of a national database of child care archives and exit interviews for children leaving care. Davis and King's 'Understanding Parenting' workshop (07.09.12) brought researchers together with professionals from the Disabled Parent's Network, the Planned Environment Therapy Trust, Kenilworth Children's Centre and Warwick Children's Centre (Sure Start). Feedback showed that the resulting knowledge exchange broadened awareness of issues such as IVF, surrogacy and disabled parenting in relation to professionals' own work practices. Family support workers based at Warwick Children's Centre e.g. realised the need 'when working with parents to consider the wider family and the impact upon them' and 'to be more supportive to IVF parents'.

Public engagement with impact

King and Thomson's research underpinned a theatre production and public exhibition, bringing their work to broader audiences. King was the historical consultant for Babakas Theatre's production 'Our Fathers' at the Warwick Arts Centre 12-13.06.12. The artistic director confirmed that King's research enriched the creative process and enabled Babakas to produce a more 'thought-provoking, insightful and thematically ambitious piece' that situated the artists' own stories within a wider historical and social context. The two performances, followed by panel discussions, involving academics, actors, journalists and representatives from fathers' groups, attracted a combined public audience of 200 and encouraged the public to reflect on their own attitudes and experiences, and think more deeply about fatherhood and family life: 'it made me consider further the role my father played in my upbringing'... 'it has highlighted the lasting effect my actions have on my children'. The significance of King's role is further shown by the integration of ideas from the panel discussions and audience feedback into the play's ongoing development for a national tour in 2013, for example by consideration of how parenting is shaped by biology versus history/culture and the differences between motherhood and fatherhood. Thomson's research on the changing landscape of the child informed the exhibition 'Modern British Childhood' at the V&A Museum of Childhood. As historical consultant, Thomson advised the curator on the selection and interpretation of objects, suggested key themes and the periodisation of the exhibition. His expertise shaped the curator's 'thoughts on the major changes to childhood in the last 60 years' and provided 'real depth and context to our ideas and narrative for the exhibition', while his 'ideas for some of the objects were inspired'. The exhibition ran from October 2012-April 2013 and was

seen by some 256,993 visitors. Visitor feedback (505 interviews) showed that the exhibition raised public awareness of the meaning of childhood and how attitudes towards health, education and children's role in society have changed over time. With 51% of visitors being part of a family group visit, the exhibition encouraged intergenerational discussions about the changing experiences and memories of childhood. This was borne out in visitors' comments, with the historical perspective and displays praised for 'provoking memories', and offering a 'good explanation of changes in parenting, family structure and welfare provisions'. A representative sample of 1,241 visitors, observed over 16 days, revealed that families (54% of the total sample) were most inclined to engage meaningfully with the exhibition, spending up to 15 minutes exploring the objects and interactive installations. Family groups were observed to make distinct connections with objects, linked to personal experience, and leave with a firm understanding of the exhibition's key themes.

Media

The researchers have engaged with diverse public audiences via public lectures, and print and broadcast media. King contributed to a public debate on the future of the family at the Sheffield Salon (15.03.12) attended by c.70 people, while Marland participated in a panel and public audience discussion (about 60 people), as part of the Festival of Ideas (University of Cambridge, 01.11.12), on the hospitalisation of childbirth in the twentieth century. The significance of the impact is demonstrated by CHM research being extensively referenced in print and broadcast media. In March 2012, Davis' book, *Modern Motherhood*, generated substantial coverage in national newspapers, including the *Guardian*, *The Times*, and the *Daily Mail*. Davis and Marland have both discussed their research on BBC Radio 4's 'Women's Hour' (23.03.12; 23.01.08), and Thomson discussed post-war ideas about the psychological importance of attachment between mother and child on BBC Radio 4's 'Freudian Slippage' (20.12.10).

Collectively, CHM research has provided important historical perspectives on the way people understand health, well-being and the family. It has enriched cultural life by provoking memories of past childhoods and it offers context and meaning to numerous current debates and policy initiatives on parenting and childhood development.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

History & Policy Papers

Thomson, 'Bowlbyism and the post-war settlement', 06.10.11; 'Child rights, wellbeing, and the balance between freedom and protection in post-war Britain', 27.10.11 (<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/engagement/seminars.html#dfe>)
 King, 'Supporting active fatherhood in Britain', 13.06.12, c.900 views (<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-132.html>)
 Davis, 'Choice, policy and practice in maternity care since 1948', 23.05.13, 295 views (<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-146.html>)

Stakeholder Workshops

'Child Care Archives. Problems, Opportunities and Consequences', 10.06.12: conference report <http://www.cchn.org.uk/newsletters/newsletter05.pdf> [PDF available].
 'Understanding Parenting: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives', 07.09.12: participant feedback.

Museum and Performing Arts Partnerships

Testimonial from the Director and artists of Babakas Theatre
 Testimonial from V&A Museum of Childhood curator
 Formal visitor evaluation, conducted by the V&A Museum of Childhood: 505 visitor interviews

Media Appearances

Davis: BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour discussing childcare manuals, 23.03.12, estimated weekly audience 3.3 million (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00qctqd>).
 Marland: BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour discussing childbed fever, 23.01.08, estimated weekly audience 3.3 million: (http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/04/2008_04_wed.shtml).