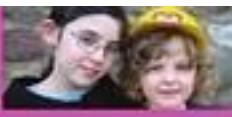


# Embodying Women's Work



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In "Embodying Women's Work", I extend the growing debate on gender, women's bodies, and work. I do this by considering 'women's work' from two perspectives, the first of which conceptualises the labour of maternity (potential and actual) as women's work, the second of which explores the dynamics between women's bodies and employment. In relation to women's reproductive labour, I suggest that the potential for maternity constitutes 'women's work' in the sense that some women are 'expected' to produce children, while others are criticised for giving birth. I argue for the re-conceptualisation of pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding as forms of work and I suggest that mothers are required to perform particular forms of body work, in the context of health advice and in the workplace, in order to comply simultaneously with narratives of 'good' mothering and the embodied norms of the workplace. I observe how these are conflicting requirements, which place irreconcilable demands on women, as well as constraining women's choice. I then consider women's bodies in the context of different forms of paid work. I discuss how far women remain at an economic disadvantage in comparison with male workers and suggest that this occurs in the context of both executive and unskilled labour. I thus explore women's entry into the fields of politics and professional employment, and then focus on how the labours of service and personal care have transferred from the home to the labour market and remain the province of women - for example care of pre-school children and the elderly. I link this discussion with the issue of sexuality and women's employment, both in the context of conventional forms of paid work, and in relation to sex work. Finally, I consider the uniformed woman's body in the context of police, fire armed services.

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