'DISGUSTING CELEBRITIES' - CELEBRITY MOTHERHOOD AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF AUSTERITY

Kim Allen (Manchester Metropolitan University), Heather Mendick, Aisha Ahmed (Brunel University), and Laura Harvey (University of Surrey)
‘In the midst of a collective social failure that makes it hard to combine work and childcare, there has been a fetishization of the maternal. This has taken a number of forms [including] a reinvigorated romanticization of the housewife… at exactly the same time as neoliberal policies have sought to cut back on state day care provision… [This] works to obscure the effects of these policies as it renders looking after children a thoroughly private issue. (Littler 2013: 232)

‘This model of maternal citizenship is counter-posed by an abject maternal figure – a single mother with several children fathered by different men, reliant on benefits, living in a council house, and with an appearance which suggests lack of attention to body image which within today’s moral universe imply fecklessness, promiscuity and inadequate parenting’ (McRobbie 2013: 122)
THE ‘DEBATING CHAMBER’ OF CELEBRITY MOTHERHOOD

Celebrity culture as a site within which broader anxieties and perceived crises around the self and society crystallise (Dyer, 1984)

McRobbie (2013) ‘visual media governmentality’

Tyler’s (2013) figurative methodology and social abjection

What can contemporary figures of mediated celebrity maternity tell us about contemporary norms and values surrounding the family, ‘work’, aspiration, femininity, social class, race and the role of the state within the current conjecture?
THE STUDY: ‘CELEBRITY CULTURE AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S CLASSED AND GENDERED ASPIRATIONS’

2012-14 qualitative interdisciplinary project

Group and individual interviews with young people (14-17 years) about their aspirations and engagement with celebrity

Textual analysis of mediation of 12 case study celebrities over 6 months across key outlets — three pregnant or new mothers
‘Two pregnant women, two very different approaches to pregnancy. Whilst one - Kate Middleton - retains her usual, beautiful poise and decorum the other - Kim Kardashian - hasn’t.’

EXCLUSIVE: Lord and Lady of the Manor! Kanye West and Kim Kardashian continue their spending splurge as they kit out Bel Air mansion with SIX £125k beds

‘Kate Middleton is committed to going the extra mile to make her man happy ...taking cooking lessons from new housekeeper’

‘You know Kim Kardashian is bad when you sort of miss Paris Hilton’

Duchess Of Cambridge 'Preparing Humble Nursery' For Royal Baby

Kate Middleton has been frugal when it comes to designing home for her child
BEYONCE AND EXEMPLARY FEMININE-MATERNITY – DISRUPTING OUR ‘SMOOTH’ THEORIES

Despite her race, ‘sexy’ and exposed body, and association with excessive consumption, positive affect and the image of ‘good mother’ still attaches to Beyonce.

Why?

1. Hard work

2. ‘Mrs Carter’: the home and stable heterosexual marriage as rightful place

3. Beyonce the feminist