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Event: BSA Annual Conference 2021: Remaking the Future
Event Date: 13/04/2021
Institution: University of Sunderland

Presentation Mode: Oral
Title of presentation: The Future, Reproductive Autonomy, Choice and Care: Narratives on life and future from women who are not mothers.
Preferred stream: Lifecourse

Keyword 1: Reproductive Choice
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Abstract Text:

This paper presents interim findings of an ongoing project which explores diversity and commonalities in lives of ‘child free’ women. How we are all positioned in relation to social reproduction is crucial to imagining the future. This project is exploring the effects of pro-natalist ideologies on the lives of ‘child free’ women. Initial analysis is producing insights into, how we define ‘care’ who does care work in society and imagining who will do this in the future. Lives and choices are shaped by gendered assumptions and reproductive autonomy remains contested. Women who choose to be child free or those who yearn for it but cannot be mothers are positioned in culture and society as ‘other’ femininity. Motherhood for lesbians was seen as dangerous and transgressive but also the choice for single heterosexual women to remain ‘child free’ creates “Otherhood” and for women in relationships with men produces ambiguities, assumptions and judgement. Black and disabled feminists draw attention to particularities of experience; therefore, the project involves mixed methods and intersectional sampling of ‘child free’ women. In workforce agendas there has been a focus on childcare and flexible working as a key progressive move towards equality for women. These measures, however do not speak to women who are not mothers and tensions arise in many workplaces. This research potentially contributes to this closing a gap of understanding and could support those seeking meaningful equality strategies that are inclusive of all women and men. At the same time raises more global questions .