



# Gender<sup>o</sup> distress: Academe and Mothering

## Background and analysis of the situation:

Revisiting mothering as a personal, social, political and economic problem.  
Key object of study in Feminists' theories.  
Today becomes a topic of debate in social sciences.  
This research looks at the difficulties faced by female researchers when they try to progress in their academic trajectory.

## Objectives:

- \* Problematizing mothering from feminist theories' point of view.
- \* Gender inequality in the experiences of mothering and academics trajectories.

## Hypothesis:

- \* Mothering as a hindrance in women's academic itinerary.
- \* The experience of mothering subordinated to academic needs.

## Methodology:

### Fieldwork

- 20 in-depth interviews to female researchers between 25 and 35 years old; mothers and non-mothers in Pamplona and Madrid.
- Press dossier.
- Statistical exploration "Women in numbers" Women's Institute.

## Theoretical fundamentation:

Natural vocation and physiologic destiny. Simone de Beauvoir, 1949.  
Normative discourses and biographic speeches. Adrienne Rich, 1976.  
Mothering exercise or shared parenthood. Nancy Chodorow, 1978.  
Demythologize the "maternal instinct". Elizabeth Badinter, 1980.  
Different possibilities of mothering as cultural practices. Judith Butler, 1990.  
The happy mother myth. Amparo Moreno, 1994.  
Ideology of intensive mothering. Sharon Hays, 1996.  
The figures of mothering as sense producers. Silvia Tubert, 2001.  
Mothering: the other invisible work. Mabel Barrin, 2002.  
Job instability and mothering. Malenfant y Koninch, 2002.  
Self-sufficient mothering. Paloma Fernández, 2006.  
Expectant mother women and gestation mothers. Elixabete Imaz, 2008.

## Qualitative Findings:

### From scholarship to scholarship without mothering projects

Research as a reference universe and the mothering projects as a later instinct.  
"Now I'm reconciling a little else with mothering... I've lived a time of some fears in that idea... of fighting against the idea of... if women aren't mothers, we are incomplete" (EP 1: no-mother, education scholarship holder, 28 years old)

### Research and mothering: contested vocations?

Sustainability of life: tension and balance between research and mothering as life projects.  
"I'm a vocational mother. I was delighted because I had the children in a mature age, even when I had finished the PhD" (EP 5: mother, investigator, 34 years old)

### Back home

Gender syncretism: conflict between traditional and modern values.  
"Then I'll quit my job... I'd like to live in pace with my children and being a housewife... it's a mixture of all... and now my husband can allow me to do that"  
(EP 10: mother, department director, 34 years old)

## Conclusions:

The social significance of mothering changes culturally.  
Mothering is a social and political issue.  
Gender inequality in sustainability of life.  
Research as a project of autonomy.

Mercedes Bogino Barrambeberé.

Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Master, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.  
E-mail: mechibog@hotmail.com

Sandra Ilana Benito.

Feminist and Gender Studies Master, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.  
E-mail: sandrillana@hotmail.com