

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Oxford Brookes University		
Unit of Assessment: 19, Politics and International Studies		
Title of case study: Shaping national and international policy on gender, family caring and parental wellbeing		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Tina Miller	Professor of Sociology	[text removed for publication]
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013–July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N (though note case study for REF2014)		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Miller's longitudinal research on family-work transitions challenges the gendered norms which have traditionally shaped caring responsibilities as female. Her findings have changed public perceptions, generated fresh debate, and informed public policy on parental and equality issues. Specifically, this has been achieved through her close explorations of how caring is conducted and proposing alternative ways of organising caring and paid work, thus revising normative accounts of <i>who</i> cares. Miller's research has a global reach, and has shaped national and international policies on equality, as well as contributing to parental wellbeing through World Health Organisation and other service-delivery guidelines. Her research has been cited in parental leave debates at parliamentary select committees and EU meetings and has resulted in policy implementation. Miller's impact is further extended through her high-profile work in media and the arts, which has influenced public opinion.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Miller's longitudinal research has focused on the intersections between societal and policy assumptions and gendered practices across the domains of contemporary family lives and paid work. In 2014 Miller was awarded a one-year British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (GBP118,134), which supported her continued research. The award enabled Miller to return to participants from her 2005 'Transition to Motherhood' [1] study, and her 2010 'Transition to Fatherhood' [2] study, to collect further data on mothering and fathering experiences. Together these studies provided a synthesised account of mothers and fathers transition to parenthood and how parenthood is affected by a gendered distribution of caring and paid work. The research has been able to capture more detail over a longer time period than any comparable study. The findings produced a temporally sensitive account of how gender and gendered practices have shaped parenthood practices. These have shed light on the normative assumptions through which caring responsibilities and paid work are organised. Disturbing current neoliberal conceptions, Miller reveals how today's expectations of parenthood, in conjunction with workplace practices, have intensified gendered demands on parents – especially working women who are mothers.</p> <p>The findings from this study were published in Miller's third Cambridge University Press monograph 'Making Sense of Parenthood: Gender, Caring and Family Lives' in 2017 [3]. The book highlights the subtle and overt ways in which normative assumptions about gender continue to shape the organisation of caring and workplace responsibilities. Much of this work is policy-relevant, including, for example, Miller's explanation for why some government initiatives such as Shared Parental Leave (SPL) proved unappealing to parents. Miller's research provides a nuanced understanding of the cultural changes that are required if men are to assume a more active paternal role, including the need for revised parental leave policies [4]. The importance of recognising how maternal caring is shaped by structural rather than wholly essentialist and biologically determined factors, is also explored. Collectively, Miller's findings challenge normative and gendered assumptions about how modern family life is organised, making visible factors</p>		

previously taken for granted. Miller's fine-grained attention to the interface between normative expectations, recent theorisations of parental caring and gender, and a rapidly changing labour market has had a far-reaching impact on parental leave policies, and gender equality policies more broadly, across the UK, Europe and beyond.

Relatedly, Miller has collaborated with colleagues at the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) to address the role of mothers and fathers in childbirth and transition experiences and associated wellbeing. On the strength of her 2005 study 'Transition to Motherhood' and an earlier WHO advisory role on the introduction of the HPV vaccine, Miller was invited in 2014 to produce WHO guidelines on Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) practices. These led, in turn, to her contribution to WHO recommendations for health promotion interventions for maternal and newborn health in low and middle-income countries in 2015 [5]. These guidelines were followed, in 2017, by implementation research focused on ways to promote partnership working between TBAs and skilled practitioners, in efforts to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality [6].

More recently, Miller's research on cultural constructions of gendered practices has continued with a British Academy award (2018–2021). Developing her work on the interactions between societal expectations and practices of fatherhood, Miller has compared experiences of fatherhood among Syrian refugees living in the UK and Sweden, focusing in particular on policies surrounding integration. This ongoing project was shortlisted for the *Times Higher Education Awards Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences* in 2019 (<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/about-brookes/news/syrian-refugee-study-shortlisted-for-research-project-of-the-year-award/>).

3. References to the research

- 1) Miller, T. (2005) *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511489501 (Turkish translation published in 2009)
- 2) Miller, T. (2010) *Making Sense of Fatherhood: Gender, Caring and Paid Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511778186
- 3) Miller, T. (2017) *Making Sense of Parenthood, Gender, Caring and Family Lives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/9781316219270
- 4) Miller, T. (2018) 'Instruments to foster long-term paternal involvement in family work: the view from the UK', 1-9. Comments Paper – United Kingdom, The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality. Available [here](#)
- 5) Miller, T. (2014) 'The content and conditions related to the implementation of interventions to increase partnerships with Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) for improved Maternal and Newborn Health (MNH) outcomes', 1-14. WHO (Commissioned paper, available on request) This Report 'provides a reference point for further research beyond the original institution', see section 5, source i).
- 6) Miller, T. and Smith, H. (2017) 'Establishing partnership with Traditional Birth Attendants for improved maternal and newborn health: a review of factors influencing implementation', *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 17: 365. DOI: 10.1186/s12884-017-1534-y

4. Details of the impact

Miller's longitudinal, cumulative and detailed findings have had a distinct impact on public understanding of gender equality, the organisation of caring and paid work, transition to first-time parenthood and childbirth. The findings have also had a material and demonstrable impact on policy implementation, guidelines and service delivery. Key beneficiaries include national and international policy makers, NGOs and service provider organisations and service users. Miller has also engaged wider public audiences through community engagement and media work, having been selected from over 2000 applicants as one of 30 to receive training in the first BBC Woman Expert scheme (2014). The nature and extent of Miller's impact in relation to policy, guidelines and media and community engagement, is evidenced below:

Policy contributions and change

Miller's research on parental and paternal leave policies has asserted impact both nationally and internationally. Miller was the only academic invited to provide oral evidence to the Parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee at the 2017 enquiry into *'Fathers in the workplace'* [a]. Miller citing her research, argued for the need for non-transferable leave entitlement for fathers in order to facilitate family caring and gender equality, and her statement directly informed one of the six recommendations made in the final report [b, c]. Miller's contribution was described in the following way by the Special Advisor to the committee, *"your contribution in the oral evidence session was one of the most useful and compelling that we heard. You were able to speak with great authority, due to your extensive research, on the challenges faced by fathers in the workplace, the men's impact on their partner, and the degree to which fathers' opportunities to balance work and care contribute to child and maternal wellbeing and to gender equality"* [d]. Miller's contribution reached a wider audience, and shaped public opinion, when her research-informed call for non-transferable leave entitlement was prominently cited in the Guardian newspaper [c]. Following this, 477 comments were posted to the Guardian's online discussion platform linked to the article, moving forward public debate about paternal leave.

Internationally, Miller has also contributed to EU policy consultations leading to change. Her research on gender and practices of caring and paid work informed an EU Gender Equality meeting on *'Instruments to foster long-term paternal involvement in family work'* (Berlin, October 2018). Miller was appointed to represent the UK at the two-day meeting as the sole academic accompanying the Government Equalities Office representative. In addition, Miller was commissioned to write and present a Comments paper dealing with the UK Policy context [e]. This paper now forms part of an EU evidence base which, in turn, has proved foundational to policy discussions and decisions across EU member states [e]. The resulting EU Summary document specifically cites the UK contribution and directly quotes Miller's research findings, including the need *'to promote care as a value. Childcare is invisible, hard and lonely and needs to be valued'* [e]. In a follow-up survey, 89% of EU country representatives who'd attended the meeting, reported that what they had learned had been useful for developing leave policy in their home country [f].

Since 2014 Miller has continued her collaboration with the Government Equalities Office (GEO, which works with the Cabinet Office), where she has shared her research on the complexities of care and workplace arrangements from different parental perspectives. The Policy Lead for 'Family Friendly Policies' at GEO has attested to *'the significant impact [her] work has had on the development of policy here in the Government Equalities Office... enabling us to develop a much deeper understanding of the parental leave system, its history and its policy impact'* [g]. Miller has participated in GEO consultation events on Gender and Fatherhood with Government Ministers in 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019. She is an active, invited member of the GEO Workplace and Gender Equality (WAGE) Research Programme and her current research focus on Motherhood in Lockdown is cited in the GEO 'Covid-19 Equalities' online research Observatory (July, 2020).

Recommendations and Guideline development: Reproductive and parental wellbeing

A continuing focus in Miller's longitudinal research has been to document and challenge stereotypical attitudes towards childbirth, caring and parenting and she has had a positive impact on a diverse range of beneficiaries in the UK and globally. For example, her research has identified and helped to advance new parent support needs and wellbeing, by influencing policies in relation to a range of service providers (e.g. formal and informal services including midwives and TBAs). Miller was appointed to the steering group committee of the UK's leading charity for parents, the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) in 2014, as part of their 'New Parent Support and First 1,000 Days study'. This led to the publication of two major NCT Reports with key recommendations: *'Birth to toddlers'* and *'New parents' experiences of returning to work'* [h]. Both publications draw upon and cite Miller's research and monographs on Motherhood (2005) and Fatherhood (2010). For example, *"Reflecting a theme from Miller's work, the women appeared to find it easier to admit mixed or negative feelings and experiences as a mother of a young baby in retrospect rather than at the time"* [h, page 16]. Since 2015 these reports and recommendations have shaped NCT practice and advice to new parents via their website, publications and courses, reaching millions of parents (<https://www.nct.org.uk/>).

At a global level, Miller's continued collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) has

influenced changes in service-delivery guidelines (2015) in relation to birth and the use of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) in low and middle-income countries [i]. The guidelines are aimed at *'health programme managers, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, and policy makers who are responsible for designing maternal, newborn and child health programmes'* [i]. Miller was appointed by WHO to focus on interventions to promote partnerships between TBAs and skilled service providers in order to reduce TBA managed births and so reduce rates of maternal morbidity and mortality. Her work on this became *'Recommendation 6: Partnership with Traditional Birth Attendants'* in the published guidelines [i, page 30]. Practical examples of implementing partnership working between TBAs and skilled service providers were published by Miller (and H. Smith) in 2017 [6]. This implementation paper had been accessed over 3,900 times (by 31/07/20) and cited in papers focused on changing maternal service provision in Myanmar, Guatemala, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Ghana.

Changing public understandings of parental wellbeing: media and community engagement

Miller's research findings have revealed the ways in which gender has unequally permeated and shaped family, caring and paid work/parental arrangements. Through a wide range of local, national and international media engagements Miller has successfully reached diverse public audiences, and engaged debate about family lives, parental leave policies and 'responsibilities' for care work. These include most recently solo authoring an edition of the flagship BBC Radio 4 series 'Analysis' (June 2020), which explicitly examines *'the ideas and forces which shape public policy in Britain and abroad'*. Miller's programme and subsequent podcast (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000k2tv>) focused on the theme of 'Modern Parenting' and drew upon her longitudinal research findings, which evidence change in practices of parenting. Miller explored why more time and money are now spent on children than ever before, and what this trend tells us about neoliberal cultural values. The audience for the BBC Analysis series (including weekly repeats and podcast downloads) is just over 1 million listeners each week. Miller's programme also prompted twitter debate and individual reflections on parenting behaviours, for example, one unsolicited email received, noted: *'I have just listened to your Podcast on parenting and found it very interesting. At the end of the programme you question the impact of lockdown on parenting and reducing certain pressures (and) I wanted to share my experience [] I felt such a sense of relief when lockdown happened as it meant that pressure was removed from me [] Thank you for your thought-provoking programme. A lot of it resonated very strongly with my experiences'*.

Further examples of generating public debate by questioning and presenting alternative ways of organising parental caring and paid work have been facilitated through contributions to TV, radio and popular media. These have included covering topics such as; 'Fathers' involvement in caring for children' (BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour); 'Family and economic change' (BBC TV Breakfast Programme and BBC Radio Manchester, Jan 2014); 'Gender and masculinities' (BBC TV Breakfast Programme, July 2014); 'Parenting Apps' (BBC TV News 24, 2015); 'Men and Parenting' (ABC Radio, Australia, 2014). Miller has also publicly debated government parental leave policies and the high costs of child-care, for example with the then Minister for Childcare, Sam Gyimah, during the 2015 election campaign (BBC Radio Oxford and BBC TV, 2015). The opportunities and limitations of the 2015 Shared Parental Leave (SPL) policy have also been illuminated by Miller, both through EU policy engagements (above) and through media contributions, for example the BBC Radio Eye on Wales programme on Shared Parental Leave in 2017 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0563jsk>).

Through other media engagements Miller has impacted upon an international public conversation surrounding birth and early parenting. She has enriched debate, engaging and informing a wide range of audiences on her research topics of birth, parenting and the organisation of caring and paid work. Public conversations have included topics such as, 'Mothering in the UK' (Voice of Islam UK, Radio, 2019) and in debate with renowned obstetrician Michel Odent, in a radio programme on 'The man's role in childbirth, cultural change and birthing practices' (Russian World Service Radio, Voice of Russia, 2014). Other routes through which Miller has shared research findings and prompted public debate include interviews with journalists and popular authors. For example, Miller's argument that caring for children too often assumes maternal care as primary, was centrally featured in a high-profile piece titled *'Enough! No more praising Dads for doing the basics'*

Impact case study (REF3)

in Grazia magazine (23/04/19) [j]. This magazine has weekly circulation figures of 102,427. Similarly, Miller has been interviewed and her research cited at length in popular works of life-writing such as Genevieve Robert's *Going Solo: My Choice to Become a Single Mother Using a Donor* (Piatkus, 2019).

Miller has also contributed to events examining motherhood experiences and mental wellbeing at the community level. Her 2005 monograph, *Making Sense of Motherhood*, was adopted by playwright Sue Bevan as the basis for a play *Mum's the Word*, which explores 'the contrast between the pre-mother idealism and the challenges of the early experience of motherhood'. The play won the Drama Association of Wales International One Act Play Competition and in 2017, supported by Arts Council Funding, was performed in London and the Isle of Wight. It was then performed in Oxford as part of the Oxford Brookes University 'Think Human' Festival. The play 'Mum's the Word' has now been performed at two community events held at the Ark T Community Centre, Oxford (2017 and 2019), at which playwright Bevan together with Miller, facilitated post-performance workshops. These workshops enabled women to reflect upon and share their transition and early motherhood experiences. Typical post-workshop feedback comments include: "Incredibly thought-provoking and touching on a subject (the struggles of early motherhood) that we are all too proud to discuss with others." "Thank you very much. It touched on many aspects of motherhood that I faced with my daughter who is 6 months. It reminded me how vulnerable I felt after birth and for the first 2 months.... It recharged me to celebrate myself as a mother who has managed so far 6 months of being a mother."

Through her research, Miller has engaged with diverse beneficiaries and achieved internationally excellent reach and significance. This has been demonstrated by enhancing understanding at the community level, through interventions and policy contributions at government and EU level, and global recommendations and guidelines on parental wellbeing. Each of these levels and types of research-led engagement has resulted in a significant contribution and transformation.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- a) Women and Equalities Committee. Wednesday 22 March 2017. Witness Professor Tina Miller, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford. Available [here](#)
- b) House of Commons, Women and Equalities Committee, 'Fathers and the workplace'. First Report of Session 2017–2019, HC 358 (Miller cited on pages 11 and 22). Available [here](#)
- c) The Guardian, 'Call to give fathers allocated leave to improve uptake' by Topping, A., (23/03/17). Available [here](#)
- d) Email correspondence with Special Advisor on Women and Equalities Committee (23/07/20)
- e) European Commission, MLP in gender equality seminar - Long-Term Paternal Involvement in Family Work - Germany, 4-5 October 2018, available [here](#)
- f) ÖSB Consulting, email correspondence with Senior Consultant, confirming evaluation data from EU Gender Equality meeting (Berlin, October 2018)
- g) Government Equalities Office, Letter, January 2020
- h) Two National Childbirth Trust's Reports – 'From babies to toddlers: first-time mothers' and fathers' experiences from a longitudinal study', First 1,000 Days final study report (2015, available [here](#)) and 'Working it out: New parents' experiences of returning to work' (2014, available [here](#))
- i) WHO recommendations on health promotion interventions for maternal and newborn health 2015, available [here](#) (Output 5 above discussed and referenced on pages 32 and 67 and enabled WHO to develop Recommendation 6: Alternative roles for TBAs)
- j) GRAZIA, 'Enough! No More Praising Dads For Doing The Basics' by Cowood, F., (23/04/19). Available [here](#)