The way in which families are formed and decisions about having children has changed over the past decades for many reasons. One issue relating to this is how the delay in starting to have children has resulted in a rise in those suffering with fertility problems. This mini track aims to explore the implications for professional women’s careers and wellbeing in relation to the postponement of fertility decisions associated with the increasingly prolonged pre-labour market qualifications required for many professions (PhDs and post-docs in academia and the medical profession, qualifying exams in many others). The relationship between fertility and career stalling in the form of interruptions and reduced working hours as well as impacts on wages and pensions is well documented (Mincer and Polachek, 1974; Kleven et al., 2018). And although the serious physical and emotional challenges of infertility are also well studied in the medical literature (Norton 2012), the condition, mired in fear and shame, remains largely private.

This culture of silence, not only leaves those affected with little social and professional support, it also places them at a legal disadvantage. For instance, although UK law provides special protections for pregnancy and related health conditions in the workplace, pregnancies ending or threatening to end in loss are unlikely to be formally reported. Whilst this affects all women dealing with infertility, it is of particular concern for highly educated, professional women for whom motherhood largely does not start until their 30s (Livingston 2015), having spent their early adult years in higher education and getting on the career track.

Suggested topics include but are not limited to:

- document the extent of the phenomenon of miscarriage and assisted fertility in the UK or other countries
- discuss the role of the law and cultural factors
- discuss the role of labour markets factors (including entry qualifications, hiring policies, sick and parental leave policies etc)
- explore implications for women’s health and wellbeing

Professor Marina Della Giusta is Professor of Economics at the University of Reading. Her research is in the area of behavioural and labour economics, with particular focus on gender, stigma and social norms. Recent work focusses on the role of bias in education and labour markets, and the use of both big social data and board games to understand economic behaviour.

Professor Grace James joined Reading Law School in 2002. She was awarded her PhD from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1999 where she also worked as a Research Fellow. Professor James was awarded a grant from the Nuffield Foundation to research pregnancy-related unfair dismissal litigation at employment tribunals in England and Wales and in 2007 she was awarded AHRC Research Leave to complete a monograph with regard to this work. In 2010, she was awarded AHRC funding to establish a research network to consider law's engagement with working families (Families And Work Network - FAWN - with Professor Nicole Busby at Strathclyde University).

Submission details
In the first instance a 300 word abstract is required, to be received by 11th September 2019. Please read the guidelines at http://www.academic-conferences.org/policies/abstract-guidelines-for-papers/
Submissions must be made using the online submission form at: https://www.academic-conferences.org/conferences/icgr/icgr-abstract-submission/
If you have any questions about this track please email the mini track chair: m.dellagiusta@reading.ac.uk or c.g.james@reading.ac.uk
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