

## ***Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?***

New study of unmarried mothers challenges beliefs about family life in the past

**- Launched Thursday, 21 June 2012, King's College London -**

*Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England*, launched today, is the first description of the real lives of unmarried mothers and attitudes towards them in England from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. It challenges myths surrounding the history of family life, and questions perceptions of 'broken Britain', past and present.

Weaving together the human stories of unmarried mothers and their children with that of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (now Gingerbread), founded in 1918 to support them, Pat Thane of King's College London and Tanya Evans of Macquarie University, Sydney, challenge stereotypes of the mothers as desolate women, rejected by their families and society, rearing deprived children, until social attitudes were transformed in the 'permissive' 1960s.

In an exclusive [new article](#) published on the History & Policy website today, H&P co-founder Pat Thane said:

"This is the first time that the recent history of unmarried mothers in England has been told comprehensively. These are the stories of women whose lives have often been hidden and unfairly stigmatised. Our book also corrects inaccurate assumptions about family history, which persist in present-day policy and media discussion, and can result in policymaking for the present, based on a poor understanding of the past."

"It is time to abandon the myth that unmarried mothers were a creation of the 'permissive' 1960s. They were not. And the myth that previously, all unmarried mothers were impoverished and ostracised. Many were, but by no means all. And the myth that voluntary action was 'crowded out' by the welfare state after the Second World War. This was certainly not the case for the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, as the current vitality of its successor, Gingerbread, clearly demonstrates."

To read Professor Thane's article in full, visit:

[http://www.historyandpolicy.org/research/new-books/newbook\\_11.html](http://www.historyandpolicy.org/research/new-books/newbook_11.html)

## Notes to editors:

1. [\*Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England\*](#), published by Oxford University Press, will be launched at King's College London on Thursday, 21 June 2012.
2. [Pat Thane](#) is Research Professor in Contemporary History at King's College, London and co-founder of [History & Policy](#). [Tanya Evans](#) is Research Fellow at Macquarie University, Sydney.
3. History & Policy [www.historyandpolicy.org](http://www.historyandpolicy.org) is an independent initiative working for better public policy through an understanding of history. It is based at the [Institute of Contemporary British History](#) at King's College London and funded by the [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#). H&P has a national network of over 360 historians willing and able to engage with policy makers and media.
4. To attend the launch event, or to request an interview with Pat Thane, please contact the H&P Public Affairs Office:  
Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays  
Mel Porter: 0207 848 7041 / 07979 867765 [mel.porter@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:mel.porter@kcl.ac.uk)  
Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays  
Fiona Holland: 0207 848 7047 / 07710 538453 / [fiona.holland@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.holland@kcl.ac.uk)
5. To request a review copy of the book, please contact:  
Megan James, Marketing Executive, Oxford University Press: 01865 353268 / [megan.james@oup.com](mailto:megan.james@oup.com)