MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE MIND CONFERENCE

http://www.momicon.org

Overview

The Misconceptions of the Mind Conference (MoMiCon) has two aims: (1) to bring together a small group of nationally-recognized female social scientists to present their work challenging common (mis)conceptions of the mind, engage with each other in cutting-edge intellectual dialogue, and generate high-quality video content to share with the public as scientific outreach, and (2) to serve as a model for how to run a small, high-profile workshop-style conference while accommodating the needs of women who are academics with young children. The hope in focusing on this group is to start a broader conversation about how academic norms and institutions can change to accommodate scholars with different needs throughout their academic careers, thus reducing barriers to excellence in scholarship and facilitating academic outreach.

Motivations

Academic women with young children are an important group to highlight in a small, high profile conference with publicly shared content for a variety of reasons. First, it is typically challenging for women with young children to travel: it is difficult to make suitable arrangements for young children at home, but travelling with children brings its own complications. In turn, failing to travel can have substantial professional costs (e.g., research productivity, recognition in the field), interfere with the effective dissemination of research, and interfere with the establishment of productive collaborations. Small conferences very rarely offer childcare, and when childcare options are available, they typically aren't suitable for young infants. Small conferences are also less likely to be held in hotels, which can make the venue itself a challenge if nearby access to an infant (or a lactation space) is required. Even in social science fields that have achieved gender-parity at lower ranks, there are still disparities in roles with high status and high visibility, which is itself an impediment to the effective recruitment and retention of women in the field.

The science of the mind is in many ways in its infancy, yet in the last few years we've seen enormous progress in understanding basic principles of how the mind works, with exciting new developments across the psychological, social and neural sciences. Recent scientific work in this domain sometimes confirms longstanding assumptions about the mind, but in other cases such insights begin to overturn longstanding misconceptions. Confronting such misconceptions is especially important, as prevailing views about the mind influence theorizing at multiple levels, with implications for human well-being, inter-group relations, education and social policy. While the process of rejecting established views can be disruptive, showcasing multiple misconceptions side-by-side can be an important step towards recognizing and developing a new, unified approach to thinking about the mind. We therefore see great value in bringing together a group of exceptional and nationally recognized psychological scientists to explicitly articulate and confront some of these misconceptions. By confronting misconceptions that operate within the field or arise from the popular imagination or popular portrayals of the mind, we will simultaneously engage with both specialist and general audiences.

Intended Outputs from Conference

We aim to provide a series of concrete outputs from the conference to be disseminated broadly, including:

1. A series of engaging video lectures for web dissemination, including both regular and keynote presentations, and accessible to non-specialists.
2. A document and role model of “best practices” for running this type of conference.
3. Media attention to start a conversation about how to reduce barriers to participation in academic life and contributions to scholarship by academic women with young children.

Specific Accommodations for New Mothers

We aim to provide several specific accommodations for participants with young children:

1. Regular 30-minute conference breaks to allow for pumping or feeding of infant children. An additional 90-minute lunch break to provide adequate time for a meal with children and a break for the speaker and caregiver.
2. Lactation space.
3. Stroller-accessible conference venue.
4. On-site facilities suitable for children and caretakers (e.g., partner, family member or nannies) to watch children during talks.
5. Welcome reception open to speakers, partners/guests, and children.
6. Meal options for caretakers and children, in addition to conference participants.
7. Talks will start no earlier than 9:00am and end no later than 4:30pm.
8. Conference travel costs will be provided to help defray costs for invited speakers, their children and one guest with childcare responsibilities (e.g., partner, family member, or nanny).
9. Activities for caretaker and children during participant talks (e.g., a participatory music class).