**Motherhood, the great leveller? Not quite, Kate**

**Kate Middleton can never be an Everywoman, however hard the palace tries**

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The Duchess of Cambridge gave a talk at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists last week on behalf of a series of films – *Out of the Blue* – produced by the Best Beginnings organisation, promoting good mental health for parents and their children.

Her talk, saying that motherhood was “overwhelming” and a “huge challenge”, was lauded for proving that, whoever you are, motherhood is a great leveller, placing everyone in the same boat. Presumably, the idea was that ordinary mothers everywhere could now turn to each other and cry: “Thank God, we’re not alone, even Kate struggles with her lack of confidence and feelings of ignorance.” While I know it’s Mother’s Day, and the talk was for a good cause, isn’t this just blatant rubbish?

I don’t mean to attack Kate Middleton – she has her own crosses to bear. She has to endure those relentless official engagements and it can’t be much fun being forced by protocol to dress as if you’re permanently en route to the wedding of someone you don’t particularly like. All things considered, you could forgive her if she occasionally looked out over the splendour of Kensington Palace, Windsor Castle, Balmoral et al and despairingly thought that it was just one giant ghastly royal Neverland, laid on to keep the likes of her quiet and compliant.

In fairness, it should also be noted that Kate Middleton, her speechwriter, or both, at least had the self-awareness to slip in a bit about how motherhood was overwhelming even for her, “who has support at home that most mothers do not”. Here, at least, was a specific, albeit tantalisingly fleeting, reference to not only the support of her husband (the recently anointed William the Partier), nor her omnipresent mother and sister, but also to her position of astounding wealth and privilege.

The sheer fact that being Mrs Future Queen means that she is able to command wall-to-wall staff to help at any time, in any way, with the mothering of her two children.

Does this make her any less of a mother? Of course not. However, if you wished to be picky, great wealth, nannies, domestic staff, palaces, princes and the like could be said to make someone a little less credible on the subject of the myriad pressures of modern motherhood.

While shared motherhood can be a richly bonding female experience, it’s important not to run too far with this idea – and remember that there are big differences, too. Whether we like to acknowledge it or not, money or, more precisely, the lack of it, gives individual women completely different experiences of motherhood. Among other pressures, too little money can lead to such mental health issues as extreme stress and anxiety from not being able to afford help, pay bills or even take your allotted maternity leave.

On this last matter, a TUC report has just said that Britain came third from bottom in a European league table for maternity benefits. With only those in Slovakia and Ireland worse off, British women on average get less leave, less money and are forced to return to work earlier than their European counterparts.

While this is hardly Kate Middleton’s fault, just this one report exposes the insulting farce of what appears to be an ongoing campaign to present this incredibly privileged individual as some kind of royal-themed LK Bennett-styled Everywoman. The whole thing stinks too much of yon olden days, when the Hollywood PR machine would depict stars basking in the sun, next to their impeccable children, trilling about the combined pressures of stardom and motherhood, with the maids, pool cleaners and other hard-pressed staff hastily pushed out of shot.

While the duchess may have been completely genuine when she talked about the struggles of modern motherhood, let’s be generous and say that perhaps “overwhelming” means different things to different parents.