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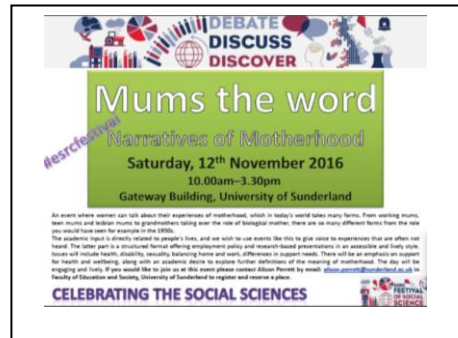
# Mums the word

*Festival of Social Sciences*

Celebrating Motherhood Voices

Held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at the Gateway Building

University of Sunderland



*Caption – to add*

**Note from the Organiser:** Our programme for the day of celebrating motherhood in many different forms offered a rich diversity and amazing opportunity to take part in discussions and activities of our diverse experiences. We heard perspectives from Sociology, Psychology and History. The inclusion of visual representation was represented by the work of two local artists who took part in the day.

There were many contributions coming forward but we decided on a structure to the day that fell into two halves. In the morning we will opened with a general facilitated discussion of all our experiences as mothers including experiences of women who are not mothers.

Our aim was to share experiences and hear each other's perspectives. *Dr Sheila Quaid*

## PROGRAMME

### 11.15am–1.15pm Experiences of Motherhood

**Ros Crawley**

*Transitions to motherhood and Psychological Effects*

**Kathryn Cassidy**

*Migration Narratives and experiences of Violence*

**Joy Ogbemudia**

*My story.... migrating from Nigeria*

**Angela Smith**

*Experiences of Widows after World War 1*



*Caption – to add*

### Festival Report, Dr Sheila Quaid

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at the University of Sunderland, School of Social Sciences, we held an ESRC (unfunded) but otherwise well-supported Festival of Social Science. We had 29 participants and it was organised by Dr Sheila Quaid at University of Sunderland.

During the event, we had a live twitter link with the ESRC Festival organised by Dr Esmee Hanna at Leeds Beckett University and her participants for *Seeing Dads Differently*. This enabled us to share a resource for dialogue. These were pre-prepared 'Post card to a Parent' and our day on motherhood finished off poignantly as each member wrote message to a parent. These are being used to think about the continuation of our network from that day with a future gathering around the same topics.

The day was wet and cold and we started early bringing teas, coffees and biscuits. We all took part in rearranging the room in the way we wanted and Leanne Pearce arrived and brought in some of her art works. Once the art was around us one participant said it 'feels like home now', and the talks began. Artistic work was contributed by Angela Sandwith and Leanne with sessions that were focussed on the visual; and the rest of the day was truly interdisciplinary with voices from history, psychology, sociology, social geography, film studies and personal biographies.

### 2–4pm Representations of Motherhood

**Sheila Quaid**

*Negotiating lesbian motherhood identities in a hostile era*

**Kim Gilligan**

*'Not a proper mam'*

**Leanne Peirce**

*Artist... discussing her recent exhibition on breastfeeding*

**Angela Sandwith**

*Artist discussing her artwork depicting a County Durham mothers loss of sons in World War 1*

**Ann Carruthers**

*Narratives of the Uterus; How reproduction in represented in films*

Feedback from the event has been hugely positive and most have said that there is a distinct need to carry on networking around matters of the maternal and its place in society. We covered work on experiential and academic perspectives. Sheila had wanted to encourage many women who have chosen not to be mothers; and there were some powerful contributions from women who are not mothers. The inclusion of mothers and women who are not mothers is something to be clearer about for next time.

### **Kim Gilligan, University of Sunderland**

*'Not a proper mam'*

Dr Kim Gilligan presented and shared thoughts on the tensions that arise when she steps outside of expectations. She says that as a working class girl it was never expected that she would be a professional academic. Also, as woman and a mam in a working class family, the expectations of you as a mam from others conflict with the expectations of professional women. The tension is one that many mams in professional life experience. Angelique (2012) in her discussion unravelling the fabric of gender and class, using feminist theory, alludes to the pressures on women from working class backgrounds to conform to expectations relating to both motherhood and work. She draws on the work of the critical theorist Marcuse (1964) to outline the incredible pressures of the powerful discourses related to hegemony. The concept of false consciousness is used to examine how different aspects of female identities are shaped and ultimately controlled. As a working- class woman who made her way through the myriad of expectations of her gender to achieve academic success, and who ultimately sees herself as what Gramsci (1971) suggests is an organic intellectual, this paper unpicks some of the personal costs of that perilous journey.

As a mother, there are many expectations and commitments required which may ultimately come in to conflict with an academic career. This discussion aims to reveal some of the issues arising from these dual roles and how they may be seen from a child's perspective who is not yet able to separate the traditional expectations of a mother with the realities of the contemporary world of academic life nor appreciate the advantages it brings them. It drew on elements of a personal biography to bring to the fore some of the realities of moving outside of the intersecting expectations of one's social class and gender.

### **Helen Telford, (Human Resources) Family Friendly Rights at work**

Helen discussed the rights of mothers at work. Helen also covered rights of fathers/parents in general and also carers. The emphasis and format was from a mother point of view but the legislation often looks at those caregivers as a group so this was also covered.

### **Ros Crawley, University of Sunderland Psychology**

Ros discussed the results of the HABiT study that examined the acceptability and efficacy of expressive writing for improving psychological and physical health as a universal intervention for postnatal women. The starting point is the recognition, that the transition to motherhood can be challenging for some women and it is a time when women are vulnerable to psychological illness. There is a recognised need for intervention to improve postnatal health, and there is some evidence from previous research groups that the particular form of writing called expressive writing might be helpful. We ran a randomised controlled trial to examine whether expressive writing would be suitable for postnatal women. It involved women six weeks after birth writing on three occasions about their deepest thoughts and feelings about something they were finding stressful. This group was compared with a group of women who carried

out a control writing task (descriptive writing about something neutral) and a normal care group. We measured acceptability and efficacy (physical health, psychological health (mood, anxiety and depression), quality of life and the stress felt in relation to whatever women wrote about – before writing, one month and six months later). Women found the writing intervention to be acceptable with positive responses from most women. Follow up measures of physical and psychological health found no effect of the writing group, so did not seem to be effective as a universal intervention. However, in the expressive writing group there was a significant reduction in rated stress, and further analyses showed that expressive writing may be more effective when it is adhered to, and it may be effective as a targeted intervention for women with poor mental health after birth.

### **Sheila Quaid, University of Sunderland, Sociology**

#### *Dangerous Lesbians and Risky Families?*

Sheila discussed her chapter in the recent publication 'Lesbian Mothering and Risky Choices: 'Dangerous' New Forms of Love and Kinship' in *Constructing Risky Identities*, Kearney and Donovan (2013). She focussed on philosophical and societal reactions against lesbian motherhood and creation of ideas of danger. The idea that Lesbian Mothers were a danger for society has had enormous influence on cultural understandings of motherhood. During the last four decades new forms of family variously, recognition, exclusion and regulation. In their work on non-heterosexual families of choice, Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan (2001) argued that lesbian and gay parenting provides a litmus test of how far a society has come in tolerating non-heterosexual identities and intimate lives. In this chapter it

is argued that lesbian-headed families have been constructed as representing an antithetical family to that most desired and idealized in society: the heterosexual nuclear family. This ideal is based on a heterosexual couple enacting gendered roles in which motherhood is constructed as the most important role for women. Thus it will be shown that different constructions of lesbians have been used and continue to be used, to reinforce the risks they pose to the social order of intimate life as well as, by extension, to society as a whole.



*Caption needed*

### **Anne Carruthers, PhD Candidate/tutor Newcastle University, Film Studies**

Anne is doctoral student in Film at Newcastle University. She discussed her project which is interdisciplinary and looks at pregnancy in contemporary cinema by considering film theory of the female reproductive body and pregnancy alongside cultural theory around the foetal ultrasound. She does this to understand the dynamic, in film, that describes narratives around the uterus. Her work uses close textual analysis of film to address the lived body experience and she refers directly to the film scholarship of Vivian Sobchack, Laura U. Marks, Jennifer Barker and Tarja Laine, as well as the qualitative research on patient narratives around the foetal scan by Julie Roberts and Charlotte Krolokke. Her corpus of films is taken from contemporary cinema from the Americas and includes *Birth* (2004), *Up* (2009) *The Bad Intentions* (2011), and *Ain't Them Bodies Saints* (2013). As well as studying film, she is an experienced theatre script reader.

She is a member of the Research Centre for Film and Digital Media (RCFDM), and the Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) at Newcastle University where she also teaches undergraduate close reading of text and postgraduate film studies.

### **Angela Smith, University of Sunderland, English literature**

*A disgrace to the name of woman: British widows and their children in the First World War*

This paper explored the development and the emergence of social regulatory apparatuses concerned with the widows and children of men who had died as a result of the First World War. By investigating the 'care and protection' discourses that circulated in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social class and gendered expectations come into play as we find that widows were regarded with a degree of mistrust that continues to affect 'unmarried mothers' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The emergent structure of social surveillance for widows and their children was explored, as accusations of cohabitation, prostitution, child neglect and drunkenness were levelled at the widows from an assortment of agencies, both official and unofficial. These agents saw themselves as, in some way, responsible for the moral surveillance of widows and the most *gossipy* of reports appear to have been treated with some degree of seriousness.



*Caption needed*

**Leanne Pearce, Artist**

Discussed her recent work in conversation with Carolyn Jess Cook.



Portraits with Purpose  
“Breastfeed”

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with breastfeeding expert, Amanda Dunbar  
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*Caption: Leanne Pearce, “Breastfeed”*

**Angela Sandwith, University of Sunderland, Artist**

She is currently Programme Leader for PGCE Design and Technology in the School of Education at the University of Sunderland. The work she discussed was her site-specific art installation titled ‘Ritual’ which explores maternal/family issues relating to war.

As an artist she works primarily in textiles and site specific installations which explore socio political and environmental issues, and her long standing concerns surrounding family and protection.

Her parents, as ‘war teenagers’ suffered the loss of friends and family; surely losing those close to you in such unforgiving circumstances is an experience that will leave its harrowing mark on you for life.

She now understands that these events contributed to their view that every single aspect of life is exceptionally sacred. As a mother of two teenagers she considered how she would feel if her children were willing/reluctant participants in a war? Would she feel proud, worried or sad, while at the same time feel happiness for them as they start out on an adventure away from home? News of their death would, she knows, cause me unimaginable pain; she would want to know everything about their passing. Where they were buried would be a major issue, when soldiers are killed today they are repatriated. How must a mother feel if the bodies of their children are not repatriated and the only hard evidence they have of their death is a message from the war office; or maybe some belongings are returned. A mother/family may have the cards and letters sent home, treasures which are lovingly read and kept safe.



*Caption needed*

## **Joy Ogbemudia, University of York**

### *Motherhood and Migration*

She migrated to the UK in October 2007 with her family. She came with her two children to join her husband who had come six months earlier. As an immigrant woman, she felt doubly silenced, first as an immigrant and secondly as a woman. She came into the UK with two dependent children ages three and one. She was a young lady of 32, full of dreams and aspirations and wanted to pursue her career and grow intellectually; she was sure the UK was the right place for her. She taught English Language in Nigeria for six years and enjoyed her profession as a teacher. She dreamt of continuous professional progression and success in her career in the UK. She was happy to be leaving the patriarchal society where women were seen but never heard but little did she know that geographical relocation does not erase stereotypes. As soon as she got to the UK, it became clear that she had to stay at home to take care of her children. They could not afford childcare, and there was no other way around it. This and many others were the prices she had to pay as an immigrant mother in the UK.



**Kathryn Cassidy, University of Northumbria, Social Geography**

Kathryn's contribution was based on two separate, but related research projects in London and on Tyneside. The London-based data was collected as part of WP9 *Borders, Intersectionality and the Everyday* of the EUBorderscapes project, which looked at everyday bordering in two London boroughs between 2013 and 2016. Kathryn then undertook a further study in Newcastle to understand more specifically the impact of everyday de- and re-bordering processes (Yuval-Davis et al. forthcoming) on BAMER women who had become subject to immigration controls after leaving a violent domestic situation. Fifteen women and a local artist led a series of participatory arts workshops, in which Kathryn was a participant observer, supported by a therapist between January and May 2016. The approach expanded upon Maggie O'Neill's work (2008), which brings together ethnography with participatory arts (ethno-mimesis) to create potential space for the transformation of emotional engagements with everyday bordering. Gill et al (2014) have argued that nation-states enact a form of spatial violence (Gill et al (2014) through their attempts to control the movement of people across their borders. This spatial violence is not separate from but connected to other forms of violence experienced by BAMER women, in what has been termed a complex of violence (Pain 2015). Kathryn explored the ways in which BAMER women's narratives of motherhood become entwined within and relational to their experiences of these different, multi-scalar forms of violence, enacted not only by state officials but also those who have increasingly been forced to undertake the policing of the UK's border in the spaces of everyday life, as a result of recent changes to UK immigration legislation.



*Caption needed*



*Caption needed*

## Mums the word

**Sheila Quaid** is a sociologist, whose passion for Gender and Diversity Studies has become a hallmark of her work in learning and teaching. Following a career in training and development she has taught women's studies and gender theory in two universities. Central to her work is a teaching style which gives others a 'voice' through which their individuality can be recognised and valued. She is interested in creating powerful learning environments and a sense of belonging that gives students confidence in their ability to contribute to teaching sessions. She is Senior Lecturer for the BSc/BA Sociology (Single Honours) at the University of Sunderland. Her research and teaching is mainly in the areas of gender, sexuality and family studies. Her PhD is entitled *Finding a Place: Negotiating Lesbian Parental Identities*. She is currently planning further follow-up research on: lesbians raising children; same-sex marriage and the impact on perceptions of kinship; and the role of the father and/or sperm donor in lesbian led families.