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January - March 2016 - Lent Term Newsletter



Lent Term got off to an exciting start with the unexpected discovery of the complete set of Warnock Committee files in the Department of Health Repository in Burnley. January also included a fascinating seminar on Thai debates over surrogacy from our distinguished visiting colleague Andrea Whittaker from ANU, and a well-attended screening of 'Donor Unknown' (followed by 'Google baby' in Week 6). 'Drawn Together' was the fascinating title of Siobhan Magee's SockTalk on representations of relatedness in graphic novels such as *Fun Home*. Last term we were also pleased to confirm next year's MPhil students Amarpreet Kaur and Mariecke Bigg, and next year's PhD candidate, Yvonne Frankfurth – all of whom have won fully funded studentships. We sadly said farewell to Andrea in February, but were compensated by welcoming Dr Marcin Smietana from Berkeley in March as a Marie Curie Fellow and new ReproSoc RA. Thank you to everyone for a great start to 2016, and see below for details of our many other activities last term!

Andrea Whittaker, 'The Rise and Fall of Commercial Surrogacy in Thailand'

Sociology on Screen

During Lent term, we screened two documentaries as part of the Sociology on

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sociology department on 26th January. She discussed her recent research on commercial surrogacy in Thailand, particularly from the point of view of Australian intended parents.

Commercial surrogacy was illegal in Thailand but the law wasn't enforced until various scandals including the Baby Gammy case hit the news in 2014. Andrea discussed the specificities of the Thai case and linked it with the long history of intimate labour concerning Thai women's bodies and she revealed that, since the law on commercial surrogacy has been enforced, intended parents are now starting to turn to Cambodia.

ReproSess

Re-Processing opportunities? Research in Progress Sessions? We are not quite sure what our new group format for sharing our work is named for exactly but it has proven so popular and successful we want more! This term we had 3 meetings – followed by ReproductiviTeas (of course, several varieties on offer and generally also cake....). The aim is to use a flexible format that enables Socks to present anything from a near-finished piece of work to an early plan for a new project in order both to receive feedback and to let others know more about their research. To be continued!

Baby (2009) both attracted large numbers of undergraduates and led to interesting post screening discussions regarding both the politics and the personal narratives of assisted reproductive technologies. The films take us, in turn, on JoEllen's journey to find her sperm donor and Doron's travels around the globe to 'produce' babies via surrogacy, and raise timely and thought-provoking questions about the relationship between globalisation, the Internet, travel, commerce and assisted reproduction, as well as between expectations and reality in the business of making babies in the 21st Century. And judging by the reactions on the evenings, these films are an accessible and enjoyable way to begin thinking about the sociology of assisted reproduction.



Congratulations to Dr Katie Hammond

Katie's dissertation on the controversial egg donation market in Canada – the first-ever sociological study of this sector -- was highly

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Pasts, parents, and 'adult childhood' in US graphic memoirs

Speaker: Siobhan Magee**Friday 4th March, 12:30 - 14:00**Sociology Tea Room, Old Cavendish Laboratory, Free School Lane,
University of Cambridge

Visiting Speaker

Siobhan Magee

On 4th March, affiliated scholar [Siobhan Magee](#) joined us to give a [talk](#) on her research on American graphic memoirs by writers including Roz Chast, Alison Bechdel and Art Spiegelman. One of the key questions that these writers address in writing about their parents and other relatives from a different generation is, 'what if I'd known then what I know now'? In a fascinating talk, Siobhan discussed the intricate connections between parenthood and childhood, inter-generational responsibility, historical contingency and the creativity of memory.

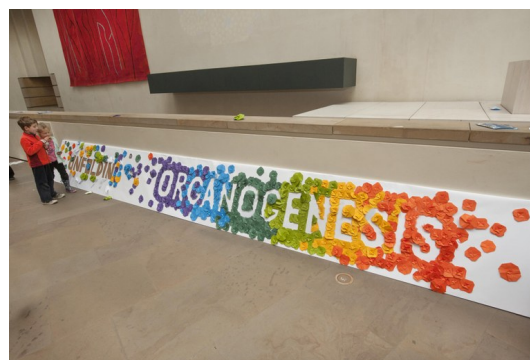
Changing Health

Continuing the CRISPR Cas-9 theme, 'Changing Health' organised by Sarah Franklin and Theresa Marteau at Christ's College last term brought together three researchers from the Sanger Centre to address the future implications of this technique in the context of both

Cambridge and Professor Emily Jackson from the LSE. Katie will take up a place at McGill Law School in the autumn and we are certain she will be as successful there as she has been at Cambridge.

GRIP! Seminar Series

Throughout Michaelmas and Lent terms, Karen Jent convened the *GRIP!* – Gender Research In Practice Seminar Series that showcased postgraduate and postdoc feminist research at ReproSoc and the Department of Sociology more widely. Focused on how an initial scrutiny of a gendered world is turned into feminist research and writing, *GRIP!* provided a friendly and informal forum promoting discussion about gender, feminism and research in practice.

**Unfolding Organogenesis Exhibition**

[Unfolding Organogenesis](#) is an interactive walk-in exhibition about organ development, regenerative medicine and origami art that Karen Jent co-curated with Eurostemcell at this year's Edinburgh International Science Festival. On display in the National Museum of Scotland in early April, the exhibition explored the laboratory growth of complex three-dimensional tissues from stem cells through the folding and unfolding of origami. It brought together stem

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Warnock Committee Files

The IVF Histories and Cultures project took a field trip to Burnley in February where Katie and Sarah were lucky to discover two complete sets of Warnock files just as they were being made public. These early files, from 1983 to 1985, and embargoed until 2015, contain all the minutes, papers, and background planning memos and correspondence related to the Committee. They offer a unique insight into the Committee's structure and process.

Congratulations to next year's RepoSoc PostGrads!

Amarpreet Kaur who will graduate from Manchester Metropolitan University with a high first, has received the highly competitive Newton Fellowship to study the implications of CRISPR-Cas9 next year as one of the first entrants to our new MPhil in the Sociology of Reproduction next autumn. She will be joined by Mariecke Bigg who will be working in collaboration with the British Library to investigate the archives of Professor Dame Anne McLaren. Mariecke is funded by the Wellcome Trust and we are pleased that Professor Joyce Harper from UCL and Dr Katie Howe from the BL will also play a key role in this project. Joining us as an ESRC-funded PhD candidate will be this year's MPhil graduate Yvonne Frankfurth, whose dissertation

discussed regenerative medicine.



Welcome Dr Marcin Smietana!

Our new RA completed the first phase of his Marie Curie-funded project in Berkeley and joined us this March for the critical writing up period of his highly original and unprecedented study of family formation by intended gay male parents who commission surrogates in the US. While in Berkeley Marcin co-organised the much-publicised 'Making Families' conference with Professor Charis Thompson, which can be [viewed on YouTube](#) along with extracts from the ['Men Having Babies'](#) conference in Brussels in June 2015. Watch this space and also [Marcin's project website](#) for the Report on the first phase findings forthcoming shortly.

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diagnosis. We are very pleased to be welcoming these new and old Socks to our team!



Happy Birthday Zachary!

Our Administrator's son Zach celebrated his first birthday in February!

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