

Programme & Abstracts

Hull Critical Love Studies workshop

24 September 2016, 10am-5pm, Blaydes House, 6 High Street, Hull, HU1 1HA

10.00 Opening remarks

10.15-11.30 **Session 1: "Professional Love"** – convened by Emma Wolverson (Hull)

Peter Oakes (Doncaster Disability Services): What's love got to do with it? Long-term support and love by paid staff in psychological health and wellbeing services.

Charlotte Cowell (Hull): The role of care home staff in facilitating continuity of love for couples living with dementia following a transition into residential care.

Coffee/tea

11.45-13.00 **Session 2: "Digital Love"** – convened by Susanne Vosmer (Hull)

Olga Mudraya (Huddersfield): Language in online dating by over-50s.

Jo Bell & Louis Bayley (Hull): Online expressions of love in the face of grief.

Lunch (provided)

13.45-15.00 **Session 3: "Love/Community/Family"** – convened by Julie Seymour (Hull)

Jo Britton (Sheffield): Exploring the lives of Muslim Men: Family, Community and Generation.

Julie Walsh (Sheffield): Community Love: The significance of 'family' in a city that is increasingly culturally diverse

Coffee/tea

15.15-16.00 **Paper & discussion: Love+/-Loss.**

Michael Gratzke (Hull): Critical Love Studies and the ends of love.

Peter Oakes, **What's love got to do with it? Long-term support and love by paid staff in psychological health and wellbeing services.**

At the Annual General Meeting of the Psychotherapy Section of the British Psychological Society back in 1995, David Smail drew on his earlier publications and suggested that:

“One of the principal things, and sometimes the only thing, psychotherapy - even good psychotherapy - offers its clients is a commodity which is not widely or plentifully available elsewhere: that is, love.” (Smail, 1995, p 1)

In this presentation, we seek to consider whether an acknowledgement of the primacy of relationship and specifically, love, might enhance our understanding and delivery of services for people – especially people who, as a result of old age, long term mental health need or disability, require the long term support and love of paid staff.

Charlotte Cowell, **The role of care home staff in facilitating continuity of love for couples living with dementia following a transition into residential care.**

Objectives: Dementia care is most commonly provided by spouses, suggesting that caregiving may be an act of love. The experience of love has so far not been explored in dementia research, and very little is known about spouses' experiences of love when their spouse diagnosed with dementia moves into residential care, and how care home staff may be involved in facilitating this. A qualitative study was therefore conducted to explore the experiences and meaning of love in relationships for spouses married to a person living with dementia following a transition into residential care.

Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine older adults who were married to a partner diagnosed with dementia who lived in residential care. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to understand the subjective lived experiences of love in the participants' relationships.

Results: Overall, the analysis identified three super-ordinate themes which highlighted the tensions faced within love and relationships for participants' and their spouses, with progression of dementia and the transition into care. Love could be identified through the performative action of care, which became a natural addition to the relationship as the dementia progressed. Following a transition into care, participants identified that care homes often play a key role in either facilitating or hindering continuity of their caring role, and as such, contribute to the continuity of love.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that the 'capital' of love underpins couples' experiences of relationships, but that tensions exist through progression of dementia and the transition into care. Further understanding is needed about how care homes can support couples to sustain love and couplehood within their relationships.

Olga Mudraya, **Language in online dating by over-50s.**

This paper reports on a case study examining key words and key semantic domains in the data collected from the online classified ads on Telegraph.co.uk dating website called KindredSpirits in 2008. Wmatrix web-based corpus processing software tool for linguistic analysis was used in order to compare the language of men looking for women, men looking for men, women looking for women, and women looking for men. The age group under investigation is the over-50s.

Linguistic research into the language of online dating ads is still scarce. The vocabulary and semantics of the online dating ads have not yet been investigated, although a number of studies in psychology and evolutionary anthropology have identified important personal trait categories, such as age, physical attractiveness, resources (current or future earning potential), and commitment to the relationship (Bereczkei & Csanaky 1996; Bereczkei et al. 1997; Greenlees & McGrew 1994; Wiederman 1993), as well as entertainment and social skills (Miller 1998). Robin Dunbar was involved in a series of evolutionary psychology investigations of different categories of words in Lonely Hearts advertisements (Waynforth & Dunbar 1995; Pawłowski & Dunbar 1999a; Pawłowski & Dunbar 1999b; Pawłowski & Dunbar 2001) that found that men and women attached different levels of importance to the following five categories of traits: attractiveness, resources, commitment, social skills and sexiness.

This case study compares the results arrived at using Wmatrix with those in Pawłowski and Dunbar (2001) findings. In this study, all five of Pawłowski and Dunbar's categories appear as statistically significant key semantic domains, although only one of them – social skills (particularly, good sense of humour) – is among the five most statistically significant. Being happy, energetic and enjoying life come at the top of our list. Similarly to Pawłowski and Dunbar's (2001) study, sexiness is not statistically significant in either of the heterosexual groups, although sexual relationship is statistically significant for homosexual men; however, even in this subgroup, general relationships based on friendship appear to be more important than sexual relationship. These findings may also support Daneback's (2006) claim that people over 50 use the internet less for sexual purposes.

Jo Bell & Louis Bayley, **Online expressions of love in the face of grief.**

This paper presents findings from recent qualitative research which focused on the online memorialisation of those who have died by suicide. It draws on data from ten individuals who have experience of creating and maintaining Facebook sites dedicated to the memory of loved ones – a child, a sibling or a friend - who have died by suicide.

Data indicated that Facebook enables the deceased to be an on-going active presence in the lives of the bereaved, with many examples of participants saying that they continue to communicate with the deceased via their Facebook accounts as if they were still alive. Keeping the deceased alive on Facebook was a way of working against loss.

This presentation explores the various ways in which Facebook has been used in the aftermath of a suicide and highlights the frequency of communication, what sentiments are expressed and how activity changes over time. Particular focus is given to how making or contributing to sites provides a unique way for the bereaved to experience the presence of their loved one, express their love for those they have lost, and stay connected the deceased.

Jo Britton, **Exploring the lives of Muslim Men: Family, Community and Generation.**

Despite a sustained research focus on Muslims, relatively little is known about the emotional lives of Muslim men. Evidence shows that the recent child sexual exploitation crisis in Rotherham has had a detrimental effect on community relations and a distinct impact on local Muslim men. My current research is exploring how Muslim men have been affected by the crisis in gender- and generationally- specific ways and how it has impacted on gender and generational relations within both their family and local community. In-depth qualitative interviews with Muslim men and women provide a unique opportunity to explore Muslim men's emotional lives and intimate, affective relationships. This involves paying close attention to discursive, performative and relational aspects of love that preliminary fieldwork indicates are likely to feature in my research participants' accounts of their everyday lived experiences in the wake of the crisis. My paper raises the question of how a critical research focus on love can help to challenge the persistent problem-centred focus on Muslim men and related dominant representations of Muslim men as key repositories of violence.

Julie Walsh, Community Love: The significance of 'family' in a city that is increasingly culturally diverse

Migration, and community cohesion, are salient issues in UK communities. There is, however, little academic focus on the role of 'families' in supporting positive connectivity between diverse populations. This paper, therefore, explores community connectivity - community love - through the lens of family display; the concept that family life must not only be done but also be seen to be done (Finch, 2007) if a family is to be recognised as legitimate. Drawing on empirical research, this paper applies this conceptual development in family life to the UK based experiences of both migrant and indigenous residents of Hull, an increasingly culturally diverse Northern UK city. This paper argues that, in the context of migration, both family members and external audiences need to recognise what is being conveyed during migrant family displays - and to accept them - for these displays to be understood as familial and, thereby, support community connectivity. Migrant families are, however, subject to the gaze of multiple audiences that are external to the immediate family; audiences that are influenced by culturally located, sometimes conflicting discourses, relating to family and/or migration. This paper therefore highlights where such discourses can both support or limit positive community connectivity.

Michael Gratzke, Critical Love Studies and the ends of love.

In this paper I will explore the relationship between love and loss in some Grand Narratives of love theory. In these loss does not necessarily mark the end of love. Some forms of loss are conceptualised as the beginning of a desire to be completed. Other powerful cultural tropes include the culmination of love in loss and the survival of love beyond loss.

I will link these love mythemes to recent work on the establishment of Critical Love Studies as a distinct approach to research into love. Focussing on romantic love (erotically charged intimate love), I will outline an affirmative approach to loss which acknowledges that human love is not eternal.

Rather than giving any firm answers, this paper will invite a discussion on further research to be conducted on the relationships between various forms of love and loss in the future. Hull Critical Love Studies is planning to run a set of events during 2017 to coincide with the City of Culture programme.