

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Leeds		
Unit of Assessment: History (28)		
Title of case study: Using historical research on families and life cycle to influence policy makers, museums, artists, and the public		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2008-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr. Laura King	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Associate Professor in Modern British History	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2012-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Multiple projects use King's historical research about families in collaboration with artists, museums, and government practitioners. The research has influenced policy, raised awareness, encouraged reflection and increased research capacity, achieving the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - changed how policy makers and professionals understand the history of fatherhood and its implications today - used histories of death and dying to achieve public health outcomes - instigated exhibitions and visitor interaction in museums, changing how museums represent childbirth and death, and influencing their audience engagement strategies - influenced artists, by using historical methodologies and research to engage their audiences <p>encouraged shifts in public thinking around childbirth, parenting and death.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (390/500 words)</p> <p>This case study is built on King's research, on the history of families, everyday life, the life cycle, emotional relationships, and digital technologies in modern Britain. The research demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing ideas and practices of fatherhood in twentieth-century Britain (2012-2018): the first major study of fathers in this period, this research demonstrated how men were involved in family life in Britain in distinctly different ways to mothers. By showing that the assumption that men were distant family members is a myth – through detailed, original analysis of cultural ideals of fatherhood and the experiences of men and their families – output 1 led to significant impact, by challenging stereotypes and raising the bar for what 'good' fatherhood entails today. • Changing practices around childbirth in Britain, c.1950s-present, and in particular gendered understandings of becoming a parent (2012-present): this research examines men's and women's experiences of becoming a parent, and the emotional impact this had on their identities and sense of self. Charting the rise in men's presence at their children's births (output 2) and a comparative study of men and women's experiences of pregnancy, birth and infant care (output 3), this research examined the relative influence of national culture and ideals within individual families in their gendered practices of childcare and parenting roles. This has implications for understanding how to promote gender equality today. • The ways in which families and individuals remember those who have died and the role of material and spatial cultures in intergenerational transmission in twentieth-century Britain (2015-present): through collaborative research into family archives and their uses over a long time period and King's individual research into families' practices of remembering the dead (output 5, 6), this research shows the diverse ways in which families have used material, spatial and sensory cultures to create inter-generational memories and 'talk' about those who have died. This research charts remembrance practices over the twentieth century, and examples of the highly unique and personal ways of remembering loved ones have formed the basis of several projects encouraging 		

individuals to reflect on how they remember the dead and how in turn they would like to be remembered.

- **The value of digital technologies in museums (2013-16):** this research is related to the previous project on childbirth. It conducted comparative analysis of museums' use of digital tools (output 4) and investigated the best methods of engaging museum audiences.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-60* (Oxford University Press, 2015).
2. '[Hiding in the Pub to Cutting the Cord? Men's presence at childbirth in Britain c.1940s-2000s](#)', *Social History of Medicine* 30:2 (2017), pp.389-407.
3. '[Gendered Perspectives on Men's Changing Familial Roles in Postwar England, c.1950-1990](#)', *Gender and History* 30:1 (2018), pp.70-92 (co-authored with [Angela Davis](#)).
4. '[Experiencing the Digital World: The Cultural Value of Digital Engagement with Heritage](#)', *Heritage and Society* 9 (2016), pp.76-101 (co-authored with [Paul Cooke](#) and [James Stark](#)).
5. '[Ties That Bind: Materiality, Identity, and the Life Course in the "Things" Families Keep](#)', *Journal of Family History* 43:2 (2018), pp.157-176 (co-authored with [Liz Gloyn](#), Vicky Crewe and [Anna Woodham](#)).
6. '[We Are What We Keep: The "Family Archive", Identity, and Public/Private Heritage](#)', *Heritage and Society* 10:3 (2017), pp.203-220 (co-authored with [Anna Woodham](#), Fiona Blair, Vicky Crewe and [Liz Gloyn](#)).

Grants:

1. AHRC Follow On Funding, 'The Role of Objects and Places in Remembrance Culture: Using research in an artistic collaboration' (PI, FEC: £83k, May-Sept 2019).
2. AHRC Leadership Fellowship, 'Living with Dying: Everyday Cultures of Dying in Family Life' (PI, FEC: £247k, Nov 2017-Jan 2019)
3. AHRC Follow On Funding, 'Using Digital Tools in the Service of Difficult Heritage', (Co-I, FEC: £100k, Sept 2015-April 2016)
4. AHRC Development Grant, 'Experiencing the Digital World: the Cultural Value of Digital Engagement with Heritage' (Co-I, FEC £30k, March-June 2014)
5. AHRC Development Grant, 'The Family Archive: Exploring Family Identities, Memories and Stories Through Curated Personal Possessions' (Co-I, FEC £53k, Oct 2014-Sept 2015)
6. British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award, 'Remembering the dead: artist-academic collaborations' (PI, £15k, Apr – Sept 2019)

4. Details of the impact (1292/750 words)

Policy

King's research into the history of fatherhood (outputs 1, 2, 3) influenced government policy and the work of professionals implementing social policy:

- In 2018 it was used by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee and cited in a report on 'Fathers in the Workplace' (source C), which noted it showed 'the ideal of a man working full-time to support his family is powerful and long embedded' and 'government policy therefore has to overcome rigid social norms about gender roles'.
- It improved awareness and confidence of social work, childcare and health workers. In 2014, King delivered a training session for Warwickshire County Council on the history of fatherhood and ways to engage fathers. Of 27 attendees from these sectors, 25 completed a questionnaire (source A), with many now planning to change their practice by 'looking at what is cultural pressure rather than best for child', 'to ensure the father is involved in the process', and 'try and engage more fathers'. On a scale of 1 to 5, the training increased delegates' scores from 2.9 to 4 on confidence in engaging with fathers and 3.1 to 4.2 on awareness of good practice.
- In 2015, King co-created a resource pack with West Yorkshire Probation Service (WYPS), which challenged the idea that men in the past were 'distant', and normalised men's role involvement with children. Of eight probation workers surveyed (source B), all

agreed or strongly agreed this resource would 'help to engage and motivate men on supervision in their role as fathers'. This research has enhanced WYPS's research capacity and helped utilise men's identities as fathers to change probationers' behaviour.

King's research into death and dying (grants 1, 2) has contributed to Leeds City Council and NHS public health policy:

- Since 2015 King has been a founding member of the Leeds Dying Matters Partnership, part of the national Dying Matters campaign. King used her research in an exhibition, artistic work (below) and public engagement events to deliver the Partnership aims to encourage planning for dying and death (source I). This approach encouraged discussion where it might be difficult (in a Council survey, 48% of people (n=815) believed that 'people around me are uncomfortable talking about death and dying', but 78% (n=819) want to talk about these subjects).
- NHS Leeds South and East Clinical Commissioning Group also used King's research to improve public communications on bereavement, including on Better Lives blog (<https://betterlivesleeds.wordpress.com/>).
- King gave a talk at the AGM for Leeds Bereavement Forum (2016) and co-curated their annual professionals' conference, as well as running a workshop (2017). This encouraged professionals (from hospices, bereavement and counselling services, NHS) to consider using historical research in their practice. 26 of 27 questionnaire respondents agreed 'exploring the past is a useful way of opening up conversations around death and dying'. Qualitative evaluation demonstrates the conference allowed professionals to reflect on historical roots of their work: comments included that King's workshop 'Really made me reflect'; 'Enjoyed this. Can relate to practice' (source J).

Museums

King's research has influenced professional practice in museums:

- Research into the history of childbirth (outputs 2, 3) and digital methodologies (grant 3, output 4) led to work with Thackray Medical Museum, Leeds, and community group, Bahar AFG (migrant women from Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Egypt). Workshops involved recording stories, images and objects related to childbirth, later published on Yarn (<http://yarncommunity.com/projects/2>), adding to the Thackray's collections on childbirth and allowing them to feature a greater range of experiences. Through evaluation it was noted that:
 - The women were more likely to visit the Thackray and other museums, and felt more confident in discussing women's health. All scored between 8 and 10 out of 10 (on a scale of 'not at all' to 'very much') when asked if they 'had been able to share information which matters to them' and all scored 9 or 10 out of 10 when asked if the project had made them think differently about using digital tools.
 - The group leader noted an increase in confidence among the group and a decrease in embarrassment, stating 'I noticed they started opening up and sharing some stories and experiences so it was kind of a barrier being broken down and an increase in confidence' (source D).
 - The curator noted the subject of childbirth allowed collaboration with community groups and people from diverse cultures/backgrounds, previously difficult. She reported that King's research, on childbirth and using digital tools, was a 'massive advantage', 'without that understanding we'd have struggled to present that to audiences', and 'the impact of the project on the museum's development has been huge'. This has allowed them to redevelop their digital strategy, and contributed to their successful applications for museums accreditation and funding from Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and Wellcome Trust. She suggests the project is a model for good practice (source E).
- King's research on death, remembrance and family archiving (grants 1 and 2, outputs 5 and 6) instigated an exhibition at Abbey House Museum, Leeds, on 'Remembrance' (March 2018-Feb 2019), co-curated by King, PDRA Jessica Hammett and the curator at Abbey House. The exhibition allowed museum visitors to reflect on remembrance and

demonstrated diverse practices of remembrance across different social groups. This allowed visitors to reflect on their own practices and opened up discussion of death.

- 31,602 visitors engaged with this exhibition and the museum has commented on unprecedented engagement with its interactive activities: 363 people (including international visitors) added postcards to the exhibition in response to the question 'How do you remember?' (source F, G).
- Exhibition events reached a further 103 people, and public engagement beyond the museum, such as four market stalls across Leeds in 2017-18, reached c.200 people. At Kirkgate market a visitor noted 'I didn't think I had anything meaningful until you were just speaking then. But I do have something [to remember a relative with]'
- The curator notes they never would have tackled this subject without King's research. It allowed them to rethink the museum's role in instigating difficult conversations and it changed their approach to displaying materials and incorporating interactive sensory experiences (source G).
- The exhibition was the subject of King's appearances on BBC Radio 4's Saturday Live and Dublin City FM (both April 2018), and featured in the *Yorkshire Post* and *Yorkshire Evening Post*.

Artists

King's research on remembrance (grants 1, 2) has deeply influenced two artistic projects:

- *The Grief Series*, Part 6, is a caravan full of stories and reflections on using places to remember. The caravan invites participation by adding to a map and an audio archive, using the historical approach inherent in King's research to drive audience interaction with the art.
 - The lead artist notes (source H) that King's research has 'made me ask questions about authorship when charting the histories of more marginalised communities', and 'working from historical source material has allowed me space free to play with ideas before inviting the participation from the public. This both allows me to more rigorously interrogate ideas and therefore [I have] been able to look after participants better.' She adds: 'working with Laura has changed the way I approach researching projects.'
 - The caravan has been on tour internationally reaching c.2850 people to date (2018-19), including participants in related workshops. The caravan has facilitated reflection on how people remember and want to be remembered and also helped them talk about death, something which remains difficult for many (source H).
- Artists from Mexican organisation Faro de Oriente participated in a two-week residency in Leeds, in part funded by King's research (grant 6). The Faro artists noted it allowed them to 'reflect on the utility of a tradition', showing increased historical ways of thinking and appetite for research and engagement with academics not present previously.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. Evaluation report from Warwickshire training.
- B. Questionnaire responses from probation workers
- C. Women and Equalities Committee report
- D. Evaluation report from women's group, Bahar AFG, constituting questionnaires from 8 women plus email from group leader
- E. Statement from Thackray Medical Museum curator
- F. Visitors' reflections on remembrance through postcards and remembrance books
- G. Interview with Abbey House Museum curator
- H. Statements from lead artist of the Grief Series
- I. Dying Matters annual reports
- J. Leeds Bereavement Forum conference evaluation