

Report to Gender Institute

Reproduction and Family Formation Workshop – November 21st, 2017

The symposium aimed to foster greater multidisciplinary collaboration and information sharing between the ANU Colleges on the topic of reproduction and family formation in Australia. This symposium responded to questions about reproduction and family formation in Australia across diverse domains – paleo-demography, fertility and climate change; the feminist economics of donor milk; the patchwork of arrangements in family law relating to non-normative families; Australian demographic data re sex selection; the economics of future demand for infertility treatments; the importance of relationality in the mother-infant relationship; drugs and the production of good and bad mothers; sex and youth transitions in Indonesia; and, scripting methodologies to explore young men’s fertility desires and intentions.

There were 20 participants in the workshop from within and outside the ANU. Participants from outside the ANU included people from Legal Aid ACT, private legal practice and people associated with maternal health and wellbeing. Across the university, the symposium attracted participants from demography, sociology, anthropology, regulation and global governance (regnet), college of health and medicine. The symposium also attracted scholars at different stages in their careers, from PhD students through to Future Fellows.

The symposium was preceded by a lecture at University House on the evening of 20th November by Professor Catherine Waldby, Director of RSSS. Entitled *Reproduction and the Social Order*, this lecture introduced participants to cutting edge theoretical insights about reproduction in contemporary popular culture through a close reading of the spectacular reproductive dystopia presented in the dramatization of Margaret Atwood’s *Handmaid’s Tale*. Waldby argued that the *Handmaid’s Tale* doesn’t properly grapple with the catastrophic consequences of reproductive failure –asking her audience to consider “What would happen if there was mass infertility: What would it do to any notion of a future?” The lecture was attended by approximately 50 people. A few of the attendee at the symposium also became new members of the Gender Institute.

Anna Olsen – Population Health



Edith Gray - Demography



Jennie Yates, Legal Aid ACT



Julie Smith – Regnet



Clare McFadden – Anthropology

