

PERFORMANCE AND THE MATERNAL



ENGAGE.... conversations conceived
across performance studies and the
maternal

Abstracts

Health, Policy and Impact – Maternal
Performance Matters, 3.11.20, 7.30 – 9pm



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Provocation: What are the pressing questions for maternal health and policy? How might performance help us to explore those questions?

Prue Thimbleby

At Swansea Bay Health Board digital stories are used to inform policy and improve services. Five years ago a young woman called Hannah recorded her story of the lack of mental health support following giving birth. Prue Thimbleby will play this story and talk about how services have changed since, ending with a recent story from a new mother in similar circumstances to Hannah.

Helena Walsh

Helena Walsh is a live artist, activist and researcher. Within her live art practice, she has mobilised performance to both explore motherhood and challenge the idealising of motherhood in an Irish context. In this performative provocation she considers the use of performance within reproductive rights campaigns on the island of Ireland, drawing on her involvement in the pro-choice direct-action feminist performance group, *Speaking of IMELDA*. Between 2013 and

2018, this London-based collective undertook performative interventions in a variety of settings to advocate for access to free, safe and legal abortion on the island of Ireland. In doing so, she points to the ways in which performance can develop understandings of maternal health and policy.

Vicky Karkou and Emma Perris

Individual experiences of women accessing maternal health services are now increasingly recognised as important. Along with these experiences come calls for the need for creativity and the arts as supportive agents in women's mental health. The *Arts for the Blues* project, led by Prof Vicky Karkou, is an evidence-based creative psychological group intervention that is based on a thematic synthesis of clients reporting on their experience of attending psychological therapies. The intervention turned helpful factors to eight key ingredients for creative arts psychotherapeutic intervention for depression. Emma Perris, a doctoral student, is working on translating the *Arts for the Blues* intervention to an approach that can support women with postnatal depression. It translation follows the Arts for the Blues protocol, but highlights the individual experiences of mothers, body-based work and dissemination of the findings through artistic means

Michelle Hartney

Michelle Hartney will talk about the United States' maternal healthcare crisis and how she uses performance to raise awareness about the country's high maternal mortality rate, postpartum PTSD, obstetric assault, and postpartum depression. She will discuss her performances *Mother's Right* and *Kimberly Said No*, and talk about *Mother Load*, a multidisciplinary show curated by Michelle featuring music, dance, and spoken word by artists creating work about the maternal.

Leah Salter

Leah Salter will present personal stories connected with her practice working in mental health services with families, particularly relating to parental mental health. This will be followed by a performative delve into practice-based research in the fields of maternal mental health and storytelling in health. The stories presented will illustrate how these two fields can usefully connect to creatively and therapeutically support women and families through challenging times.

Chair: Emily Underwood-Lee