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Gender, Equality and Intimacy: (un)comfortable bedfellows?
1-day workshop at the *Institute of Education*, London, 7th April 2014

Programme

9.30-10.00 **Registration, tea and coffee**

10.00-10.15 **Welcome and introduction**
Dr Charlotte Faircloth

Panel 1: Intimacy and Couples

10.15-10.25 **Introduction to panel**
Prof Yvette Taylor, Head of the Weeks Centre for Social and Policy
Research, London South Bank University

10.25-10.35 **Urban brides in transnational Punjabi marriages: not just
'adjusting'**
Dr Kaveri Qureshi, Research Fellow, ISCA, Oxford University

10.35-10.45 **Living Cohabitation in Contemporary Korea: The Experiences of
Lesbians, Gays and Heterosexuals**
Hwajeong Yoo, doctoral researcher, Centre for Women's Studies,
University of York

10.45-10.55 **What's love got to do with it? Exploring (in)equality in the
intimate relationships of young Gujarati Indians**
Dr Katherine Twamley, John Adams Fellow, Institute of Education

10.55-11.05 **Respondent**
Prof Lynn Jamieson, Professor of Sociology, Families and
Relationships, University of Edinburgh

11.05-11.30 **Discussion**

11.30-11.45 Tea and Coffee

Panel 2: Intimacy and Sexuality

- 11.45-11.55 **Introduction to panel**
Prof Ros Gill, Professor of Cultural and Social Analysis, City University London
- 11.55-12.05 **(re)Negotiating intimacy and sexual stories**
Dr Jo Woodiwiss Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Behavioural and Social Sciences, University of Huddersfield
- 12.05-12.15 **The Work of Seduction: Masculinity and Mediated Intimacy**
Rachel O'Neill, doctoral researcher, Culture, Media and Creative Industries, King's College London
- 12.15-12.25 **Doing it with the lights on: An exploration of the sexual lives of married and cohabiting heterosexual women**
Dr Jenny van Hooff, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Manchester Metropolitan University
- 12.25-12.35 **Respondent**
Dr Meg Barker, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Open University
- 12.35-1.00 **Discussion**

1.00-2.00 Lunch (provided)

Panel 3: Gender and Equality

- 2.00-2.10 **Introduction to panel**
Dr Claire Maxwell, Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Education, Institute of Education
- 2.10-2.20 **Can 'we' ever be equal? : Exploring equality in couple relationships**
Fiona McQueen, doctoral researcher, CRFR and Sociology, University of Edinburgh
- 2.20-2.30 **When Roles Are Reversed: The Effects of Gender Role Incongruity at Home and in the workplace**
Monica Wirz, doctoral researcher, University of Cambridge Centre for Gender Studies
- 2.30-2.40 **Who's doing the dishes now? Gender (in)equality in couples living with dementia**
Dr Geraldine Boyle, Lecturer, Centre for Applied Social Research, University of Bradford

2.40-2.50 **Respondent**
Dr Jacqui Gabb, Senior Lecturer in Social Policy, Open University

2.50-3.15 **Discussion**

3.15-3.30 Tea and Coffee

Panel 4: Parenting and Equality

3.30-3.40 **Introduction to panel**
Prof Andrea Doucet, Canada Research Chair in Gender Work and Care, Brock University (Via Skype)

3.40-3.50 **A Changing Landscape of Intimacy: The Case of Single Mothers by Choice**
Prof Linda L. Layne, Hale Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Professor of Anthropology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute/ National Science Foundation

3.50-4.00 **Considerations of equality in heterosexual single mothers' intimacy narratives**
Charlotte Morris, doctoral researcher, University of Sussex

4.00-4.10 **Challenges ahead: Negotiating equality in same-sex couples' family planning**
Robert Pralat, doctoral researcher, Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge

4.10-4.20 **Respondent**
Dr Esther Dermott, Reader in Sociology, University of Bristol

4.20-4.45 **Discussion**

4.45-5.00 **Concluding Thoughts**
Dr Katherine Twamley

5.00-6.00 Book launch of *Love, Marriage and Intimacy among Gujarati Indians: A suitable match* by Katherine Twamley

Introduced by Professor Ann Oakley, Professor of Sociology and Social Policy, Institute of Education.

Drinks and nibbles

Abstract List

Panel 1: Intimacy and couples

1. Urban brides in transnational Punjabi marriages: not just 'adjusting'

Dr Kaveri Qureshi, Research Fellow, ISCA, Oxford University

Home Office statements in the last two decades have treated the South Asian 'immigrant wife' as an unwanted figure who, with her presumed linguistic isolation and lack of exposure, is defined as a problem, bringing with her 'backward' practices of arranged marriage and patriarchy as she comes. However, research with Indian Punjabis in Britain suggested challenges to these assumptions. For young working class men in Britain, the option of marrying in India was often appealing as they could hope to marry a 'homely' young woman who would serve her in-laws. At the same time, they had preferences for urban and educated brides, who spoke English, had worked in India and would be able to work after coming to Britain. That the cachet of British-born/overseas status allowed unskilled manual workers to marry educated urban women speaks to the persistence and shoring-up of transnational patriarchies. However, the urban brides entered their marital homes with good education and prospects; indeed, they were often more educated and resourceful than their husbands, resulting in ambiguous reworkings of gender and conjugal relations. The experiences of such brides, as they migrated to Britain to live with their in-laws, is the subject of this paper, exploring the disconnections between modern expectations of intimacy and gender equality as they play out across transnational marriage migration.

2. Living Cohabitation in Contemporary Korea: The Experiences of Lesbians, Gays and Heterosexuals

Hwajeong Yoo, doctoral researcher, Centre for Women's Studies, University of York

In contemporary western culture, cohabitation is not a major issue - it has become a normal practice in everyday life. This is not at all the case in Korea where the institution of marriage is still considered the pivotal relation that authorises 'adult citizenship' (Josephson 2005: 272). Non-marital cohabitation is therefore something of a taboo. At the same time, homosexuality, though neither legal nor illegal, is also taboo and hence same-sex couples' cohabitation has hardly been discussed in Korean academe because first, it is expected to be hidden and, second, given that homosexuality is not generally accepted in Korean culture, the issue of same-sex couples' cohabitation is constructed as outside of public interest.

Hence, overall, little attention has been paid to the question of how Korean cohabiting couples live their cohabitation and what the similarities/differences in experience might be among same-sex and different-sex couples. This paper centres on cohabiting couples' reported experiences of living cohabitation, that is the dailiness of their lives together and its meaning as they articulated it in terms of

particular practices. I draw on interviews carried out between April and September 2012 with 12 heterosexuals, 9 gays and 14 lesbians, all of whom were cohabiting. In this paper I shall focus on the ways in which cohabitation was viewed as emulating and/or rejecting traditional Korean family norms. In doing so, I shall argue that the cohabiting couples did cohabitation differently, in accordance with their sexual identity.

3. What's love got to do with it? Exploring (in)equality in the intimate relationships of young Gujarati Indians

Dr Katherine Twamley, John Adams Fellow, Institute of Education London

Discourses of ideal intimate relationships are typically linked with those of partner equality. Scholarship on the relationship between intimacy and gender equality is less clear: Second wave feminists argued that false romantic promises trap women into inherently unequal marriages, while work in the 1990s from primarily male sociologists argued that intimacy can act as a positive force for equality, both within and beyond the couple relationship. Drawing on research with young heterosexual Indians in the UK and India, I will discuss how participants' aspirations for intimate equal relationships were understood (i.e. what constituted an equal relationship) and whether and how it was realised. I will show that far from enabling more equality, couples' aspirations for a 'love marriage' stood in the way of a more egalitarian relationship.

Panel 2: Intimacy and sexuality

4. (re)Negotiating intimacy and sexual stories

Dr Jo Woodiwiss Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Behavioural and Social Sciences, University of Huddersfield

Drawing on a research project looking at women's engagement with therapeutic/self-help literature this paper uses the concept of narrative frameworks to explore women's negotiation of currently circulating stories of healthy womanhood, intimacy and sexuality.

In a (western) world increasingly informed by therapeutic discourses, adult women are told they are entitled to happiness and success and failure to do so is seen to result from past (often traumatic) experiences which might or might not be remembered. Central to this construction of womanhood is what (drawing on Rich 1980) I have called 'compulsory sexuality' whereby the healthy adult woman is constructed as sexually knowledgeable, active and desirous. This not only puts pressure on all women to construct a (particular) active sexual self but helps to construct those who do not as problematic and directs them to seek both cause and solution in their damaged psychologies. One such cause is said to be childhood sexual abuse and the self-help literature aimed at survivors of such abuse encourages readers to use the idea(l) of an active sexual self as a measure of health, well-being and ultimately womanhood.

In this paper I argue that contemporary narrative frameworks of healthy womanhood not only allows for women who are not, or do not wish to be, sexually active to be identified as problematic, but directs them to see themselves as damaged. In critiquing the sexual abuse recovery literature I also show how this can be used to create different a/sexual selves, albeit ones currently perceived to be 'damaged'.

5. The Work of Seduction: Masculinity and Mediated Intimacy

**Rachel O'Neill, doctoral researcher, Culture, Media and Creative Industries
King's College London**

This paper will explore the themes of mediated intimacy and gender equality through an analysis of the teachings and practices of the 'seduction community' – an assemblage of travelling 'seduction schools', internet forums and localised groups where heterosexual men endeavour to develop the techniques and skills perceived as necessary to 'pick up' and seduce women. Through an amalgamation of concepts and principles derived from social psychology, evolutionary theory and neuro-linguistic programming, the seduction community promotes an understanding of attraction as a skill set, with intimacy cast as an affective dynamic that can be manufactured or produced (usually, if not always, as a necessary precursor to sex). The popularity and increasingly mainstream nature of these discourses raises critical questions about contemporary reconfigurations of gender, sex and intimacy. Of particular interest is the intensification of an entrepreneurial logic within the domain of personal life: men in the seduction community engage a model of sexual subjectivity centred on a neoliberal ethic of investment and return, opportunity and outcome. In this context, the ability to gain sexual access to women's bodies functions not only as a marker of status among men, but acquires a material exchange value as the production of 'successful' masculinity provides the basis for commercial enterprise. This analysis will consider how the imperative to 'manufacture' intimacy is implicated with the assumption that gender equality has been achieved; indeed, gender equality is mobilised as an explanatory or justificatory logic for the practices of the seduction community, a permutation which, I will suggest, enables the imposition of new forms of inequality.

6. Doing it with the lights on: An exploration of the sexual lives of married and cohabiting heterosexual women

**Dr Jenny van Hooff, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Manchester Metropolitan
University**

This paper presents findings drawn from qualitative research exploring the sexual and intimate lives of a small number of heterosexual women in long-term relationships (either cohabiting or married). The ideal often promoted in therapeutic literature suggests that for couples emotional closeness should be accompanied by sexual desire (Perel, 2007). Similarly a rewarding sex life is a crucial component of Giddens' 'pure' relationship (1992). Sex has become defined as the central dynamic of the late modern pair relationship and 'in this brave new age of sex, the greatest

sin is sexual boredom' (Hawkes, 1996: 119). The media furore over books such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* would suggest a new focus on female sexual pleasure. However this runs contrary to research I have previously conducted, published earlier this year (van Hooff, 2013) and current research I am undertaking.

My findings revealed that once in long term heterosexual relationships, women began conforming to traditionally stereotypical roles and did not find that either their emotional or sexual needs were being met. The 'male sexual drive discourse' (Dallos and Dallos, 1997: 138), which relies on the assumption that men and women have biologically different sex drives, proved to be particularly influential in shaping the ways participants' experience their relationships. This paper aims to contribute to an endeavour to cast light on 'everyday, mundane, conventional sexual lives' (Jackson, 2008: 34) and explores the way that women struggle with issues of desire, expectations, monogamy and sexuality in long term relationships.

Panel 3: Gender and Equality

7. Can 'we' ever be equal? : Exploring equality in couple relationships.

Fiona McQueen, doctoral researcher, CRFR and Sociology, University of Edinburgh

Sociological theory has claimed that equality within couple relationships can be: used as a barometer of social change; is incongruent with the goal of obtaining a happy family life; or is vital to an ideal form of personal relationship. Work on the 'stalled revolution' in gender equality (Hochschild, 1989) focuses on the division of labour within couple relationships, a highly researched area; however the 'transformation of intimacy' (Giddens, 1992, 1994) also refers to an agenda of emotional fulfilment. This ESRC funded doctoral research employing a mixed methods design including in depth interviews, focuses on how individuals understand their couple relationships, including how equality is conceptualised and negotiated. This paper argues that one reason for the stalled revolution in gender equality is women's prioritising of the effort made by their male partners to emotionally participate in their couple relationship. Indicating that an understanding of how emotional participation and equality interact is essential in order to understand how couples continue to have a 'sense of intimacy despite inequality continuing' (Jamieson, 1998). This paper focuses on understandings of emotional participation in couple relationships as well as the nature of 'feeling equal', which while both reported to be of paramount importance, are conceptualised in plural ways.

8. When Roles Are Reversed

Monica Wirz, doctoral researcher, University of Cambridge Centre for Gender Studies

This paper looks at elite workers and the effects of their choices regarding the management of their work-life balance. It pays particular attention to the instances in which roles have been reversed: either in situations in which the female partner becomes the main breadwinner in the relationship or in which men take on the lion

share of caring activities. It aims to explore the dynamics and conflicts involved in their concepts of gender equality and how these are applied to their lives. In doing so, this paper will argue that regardless of the awareness to equality issues, in practice, workplace cultures and intimate relationships are still deeply embedded in gendered schemas involving the concepts of the “ideal worker” and “appropriate carer”, often to the detriment of equality, either at work or at home.

This paper draws on three years of ethnographic study of professional elites. Whilst initially it aimed to provide, first, a gender analysis of how the “ideal leader” was constituted through work processes and daily interactions and, second, to understand how this impacted the way that professionals were selected to head multinational organisations, the intersections between career trajectories and family choices have soon emerged as a relevant analytical category in themselves. As such, this case study accounts for the way these professionals negotiated their public and private identities with work and in their intimate relationships.

9. Who’s doing the dishes now? Gender (in)equality in couples living with dementia

Dr. Geraldine Boyle, Lecturer, Centre for Applied Social Research, University of Bradford

Progress towards gender equality within intimate relationships has been slow, evident in the persistent unequal division of household labour. However, there has been little attention given in this debate to the experiences of disabled people, that is, the intersections between gender, disability and equality. A dramatic increase in dementia has meant that couples are increasingly facing the challenge of cognitive disability in their later lives which, in turn, poses difficulties for intimacy and the practical realities of household affairs. Whilst the literature often assumes that intimate relationships in dementia are inherently egalitarian and supportive, this may not necessarily be the case, particularly since such a perspective ignores that couple relationships *prior* to dementia may have been quite gendered in their expectations and role divisions. This paper reports findings from an ESRC-funded, qualitative study - undertaken in the North of England -which explored the everyday decisions made by married couples when one partner had dementia. The author explores whether gender influenced the division of domestic labour within the couples, particularly whether women with dementia had any say over who did the housework. The paper addresses a gap in gender equality debate in relation to the experiences of cognitively disabled women and identifies whether their illness leads to them being relieved of domestic duties or whether gender inequality persists in later life, irrespective of disability.

Panel 4: Parenting and Equality

10. A Changing Landscape of Intimacy: The Case of Single Mothers by Choice

Professor Linda L. Layne, Hale Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Professor of Anthropology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute/ National Science Foundation

A cornerstone of 2nd wave feminist movement for women's equality in the US and UK was reproductive freedom. At first the focus was on freeing women of the sexually-specific burdens of unwanted pregnancies posed for women. Later, as second wave feminists aged, the notion of reproductive choice was broadened to include the right to have children (with or without men). Single Mothers by Choice, women who purposely undertake motherhood without the involvement of a male partner, tend to be clear beneficiaries of the fruits of 2nd wave efforts for equality in terms of their level of education, employment, and financial security. In this paper, I draw on an in-depth case study of one such American Single Mother by Choice, to explore how the opportunities she has enjoyed and professional achievements she has attained thanks in part to public policies aimed at reducing discrimination based on sex or ethnicity, have shaped her intimate landscape. With her, I ask, "What is the relationship between the degree of sexual equality she and other heterosexual SMCs enjoy and their choice to forgo a long term intimate relationship with a male partner in favor the intimacies of solo motherhood? How is it that these women chose to trade in the potential pleasures of a heterosexual male bedfellow for those of bed sharing with their children? What are the consequences for adult friendships? For work-life balance? How do remaining sexual inequalities in the workplace and community especially impact SMCs?"

11. Considerations of equality in heterosexual single mothers' intimacy narratives **Charlotte Morris, doctoral researcher, University of Sussex**

This paper reports on findings from a study of the intimacy narratives of twenty-four heterosexual single mothers. Narratives highlighted ongoing gendered inequalities in relation to intimacy, contradicting notions of increasing democracy in heterosexual relationships (Giddens, 1992). More extreme examples of inequalities were evidenced in cases of domestic abuse. Participants stressed the conflict between expectations that women should both work and take full responsibility for childcare (Lewis, 2001). This conflict played out in individual relationships, often reported as contributing to relationship breakdown. Following separation, the majority of participants remained primary carers, yet also bore the brunt of financial responsibilities. It was suggested that single mothers do not invite sympathy as they are seen as simply performing the multiple roles women are expected to fulfil generally (Hochschild, 1997), whether they have a partner or not. For those who had grown up aspiring to egalitarian relationships, experiences of inequality engendered a sense of disappointment. Where new relationships were formed, consideration of equality came to the fore due to complexities in negotiating new partners' roles in relation to the child(ren). Yet, despite the emphasis on equality, these narratives were often ambivalent, containing a simultaneous longing for the perceived certainty of traditional gendered roles associated with more stable, committed, enduring relationships - often conveyed as an ideal model of intimacy against which intimate lives were measured. However, difficulty in finding dependable and / or egalitarian partners was frequently invoked. For some, couple relationships therefore became decentred as children, friends, personal development and autonomy were prioritized.

12. Challenges ahead: Negotiating equality in same-sex couples' family planning

Robert Pralat, doctoral researcher, Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge

A popular view suggests that same-sex couples are more egalitarian than heterosexual couples when it comes to power relations and the division of labour. However, empirical evidence from research on lesbian mothers and, to a lesser extent, gay fathers paints a more nuanced picture.

The hypothetically equal status of same-sex parents is often undermined in a wide range of contexts: for example, when they choose surnames for their offspring (Almack, 2005) or when they divide housework and childcare (Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins, 2007). Couples from different ethnic and class backgrounds are also likely to have different ideas about equality as well as different family values (Moore, 2008; Taylor, 2009). But is it only once a child is born when the difficulties of sustaining an equal relationship become explicit? And to what extent is it important for lesbian and gay couples to have an egalitarian partnership anyway? This paper will explore how a young generation of non-heterosexual adults imagine their future families. In particular, it will consider how individuals with strong parenting desires envisage materialising their wish to become parents.

Drawing on data from 20 in-depth interviews with lesbians and gay men from England and Wales, aged 20-35, the paper will examine various scenarios where decision-making about prospective parenthood requires an unequal level of investment from a same-sex couple. It will take a look at how these situations are negotiated between partners in the early stages of 'family planning', and what hopes and concerns they have when they think about their future.