

Master's Degree in
Women's and Gender
Studies

Gendering Happiness Conference at the University of Hull - November 2014

- Centre for Gender Studies Biennial Gender Research Conference
- Gendering Happiness: the power of pleasure
- Wednesday 26th November, 2014, WISE, University of Hull

On the 26th of November 2014 the University of Hull organized a conference entitled **Gendering Happiness: the power of pleasure**. We have received this fascinating report by Ellen Lewis, thanks to whom we can now explore some intriguing



concepts discussed during the conference. “Gendering

happiness is like a Rubik’s cube. You can think you understand what is happening, how you got there, and what needs to happen next. Yet it is never, ever, that simple. I attended my first Centre for Gender Studies conference this November in Hull. The theme of the conference, “Gendering Happiness” had me continually rotating a tier of my Rubik’s cube of learning leading me to beautiful new configurations of my understanding of happiness. What constitutes happiness, the relationship we have with it, and its subtle, pervasive and mysterious presence in our lives and social constructs.

Every part of the day, beginning with four presentations by researchers, required me to question some part of my relationship with happiness. Just twist the top layer of the cube and I am a female revolutionary in Columbia reminiscing about my ‘joyful’ revolutionary family life and struggling to acclimate to my new life back in everyday society where gender equality is still inescapably stuck (Yoana Valdivieso). Now I am clamoring for the development of a positive psychology framework to support sex-trafficked women using a strength-based model as they pursue their human right to happiness (Elena Barrio-Álvarez). I am now comforted, truly comforted, that in a

small community in Nigeria, cash crop farming by women has provided them true access to owning property, running businesses with employees, paying for their children's health and education resulting in an increase in household happiness (Majirayo Afolabi). Exuberantly, I must now straddle between The Netherlands and Nepal to see the lasting effects of post-colonial norms in the field irrigation engineering where women who are equally qualified are mostly absent from construction. Access to precious, life affirming water (Janwillem



Liebrand). My lunchtime happiness was divine, turning my

cube layer vertically now as we were serenaded by new favorite Poetess, Hollie McNish. I am such a fan of the Spoken Word. I sat joyfully listening to Hollie's cascading waterfall of words inviting us into her life as she celebrates and tussles with her grandmothers, Christmas, scones (not cupcakes) and the universality of bums.

At the end of my colorful, emotionally kaleidoscopic day I once again rotated my cube to consider an often neglected part of human anatomy, our feet. We wear them to bits, put them in constraining shapes, mediums, and heights, hoping they behave and keep us upright and safe. The short documentary "If the Shoe Fits" was a classic reminder of how too often I forget to keep my feet happy.

My Elysian cube day then managed to turn gleeful at the end of the conference day. I'm serious, I became gleeful. My definition of a perfect day, regardless of the type of day I have had, is to listen to live music. We all received a warm embrace from an all-female Ukulele band, the Four Little Pluckers at the University



of Hull's own GEMMA band on their ukuleles. Oh look!

After a day of spinning my learning cube vertically and horizontally, integrating my new understanding and commitment to happiness, I see that my Rubik's cube is as it should be, all the sides of the squares are with their companions of the same color and in their proper place."

