

MARRIAGE MIGRATION IN BRITAIN. A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Marriage Migration: a Problematic Issue

- The majority of family settlement applications is marriage-related
- One of the major sources of permanent settlement
- Risk of abuse (marriages of convenience)
- It is deemed to introduce archaic practices into liberal societies

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Marriage Migration Rules

- ▶ British policy makers have gradually established **quite severe requirements for spousal family reunification**, including limits related to minimum age, income, housing standards and language proficiency
- ▶ **Major topics:** promoting the integration of spouses, tackling forced marriages, preventing sham marriages for immigration purposes, protecting gender equality and reducing burdens on the taxpayer.

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A Gender Perspective

- ▶ Marriage migration often concerns female migrants
- ▶ Through the lens of race, ethnicity or religion, migrant or minority women are questionably seen as embodying cultural difference within the boundaries of communities and challenging the idea of nation and its borders
- ▶ “Archaic” practices associated with some migrant communities infringe gender equality

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The Argument

The engagement of political actors in protecting migrant women and promoting integration risks becoming a way of instrumentalising gender in order to further restrict immigration policies



The legal regulation on entry and residence of reunited spouses plays a crucial role in balancing the power between various family members:

- ▶ Stringent requirements for spousal family reunification (e.g. income and “probationary period”) enhance legal dependency on the sponsor and increase the uncertainty of the reunited spouses’ immigration status
- ▶ They risk weakening migrant women’s rights and their chances of achieving an active citizenship status
- ▶ Negative effects on vulnerable groups such as women, ethnic minority groups, refugees



Concluding Remarks

- ▶ Marriage migration regulation suggests some considerations about the **construction of an essentialized and homogenized notion of migrant female spouse**, connected to forms of family life that are seen as oppressive and a barrier to integration
- ▶ It is crucial to critically engage with the construction of the notion of belonging within the new gendered British politics of migration and with its shifting boundaries
- ▶ Such a critique should entail a **recognition of the complex and nuanced imaginings of belonging which are constructed through multiple positionings** that are shaped through lived experiences and embedded in complex power relations



Thank you for your attention!

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