

Sexual violence against women by unregulated sperm donors Fees-paid Masters by Research (MRes) Studentship

Project description

Increasing economic and health inequalities (e.g. reduced NHS funding, limited personal finances for private clinics) restrict women in accessing assisted conception via the medico-legal structures of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA). Consequently, increasing numbers of women are resorting to obtaining sperm donations from men on unregulated websites and social networking sites. The implications are alarming. Data (McQuoid, 2015) suggests that one in two of these women are abused by unregulated sperm donors, who insist on “Artificial Insemination Plus” (AI+), i.e., the woman sexually stimulates the man to produce the sperm sample, “Partial Insemination” (PI), i.e. the man partially inserts his penis into the woman, or “Natural Insemination” (NI), i.e. the man has unprotected sex with the woman to impregnate her. These men often sexually groom women in a vulnerable position to convince them that “PI”/“NI” doesn’t constitute sex and that these will be more effective than artificial insemination, or otherwise mislead women, agreeing to artificial insemination but then demanding AI+/PI/NI. Some online sperm donors also pressure women to send sexual photos/messages, demand high financial remuneration and/or sexually assault women pregnant with their sperm. This abuse disproportionately affects marginalised women, e.g. limited economic means, intellectual/psychosocial disabilities, young/sexual minority women. This is an important, but very new, area of research, and we are seeking an impassioned and high-achieving student who will work with us to build on Claire McQuoid’s work.

This project is likely to involve:

- A scoping review to map the key concepts underpinning this new area and the main sources and types of evidence available, including policies, legislation, academic scholarship and debates.
- Exploring whether women are willing to share their experiences of sexual coercion/violence by unregulated sperm donors, and if so, to hold detailed interviews with three or four women to better understand their experiences, the impacts on their bodies and sense of self, and their support needs. Possible methods of analysis could include interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) or narrative analysis. If it is not possible to locate enough women willing to share their experiences, the project could also include an analysis of experiences posted online/in the media.

Supervisory team

Dr Tamara Turner-Moore and Professor Georgina Jones, School of Social Sciences, Leeds Beckett University.

Start date, mode of study and funding

The start date for this studentship is 1st February 2019, though the start date could be deferred to 1st October 2019, if required. A Masters by Research is one year full-time or two years part-time. The bursary covers the costs of the tuition fees for UK and EU students. Prospective students from outside of the UK and EU will be required to make up the difference between the UK/EU fees covered by the studentship and overseas’ fees (contact [Research Admissions](#) for further

information). For funding towards living costs, see: <https://www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study>.

Eligibility

Applicants should hold a first degree equivalent to at least a UK upper second class honours degree in a relevant subject by the start of the studentship. The project would suit a student with a strong background in psychology, criminology, sociology, gender studies or a related area. Equivalent professional qualifications and any appropriate research experience may be considered. For applicants whose first language is not English, a minimum English language level of IELTS score of 7.0 with no element below 6.5 is required.

Contact us

If you are interested in applying for this project, and would like an informal chat or further information about it, or to talk through your proposal, please contact the Director of Studies, Dr. Tamara Turner-Moore, at 0113 812 6013 or t.turner-moore@leedsbeckett.ac.uk