ABSTRACTS

Julie Ham, “Risks, Resources and Allies: Sex Workers’ Strategies for Working with Other Sex Workers”
Working with others is generally recognized as an important safety strategy for sex workers, yet the ability to choose who one works with remains criminalized in various jurisdictions (e.g. Canada). Public and policy debates regarding if sex workers can or should work with others contrasts with the relative lack of research on how sex workers work with others in the sex industry. Interviews with 65 migrant, immigrant and racialized women sex workers in Vancouver, Canada and Melbourne, Australia revealed three different views that informed sex workers’ workplace relationships with other sex workers – as risks, resources or allies. This presentation explores how these perspectives of workplace dynamics shaped workers’ understanding of the sex industry and work practices.

Katie Lowe, “How does gender play a role in shaping the edgework experience of white collar boxing?”
White-collar Boxing is one of the fastest growing sports globally; it offers a platform for the “everyday person” to participate in an amateur boxing match. The fighters will not receive material gain and still there is a waiting list in Hong Kong to fight. Edgework (Lyng, 1990) may go some way in explaining boxers’ motivations, as the concept explores how individuals rationalize voluntary risk taking in various risk taking settings. Edgeworker’s engage in these activities (e.g. skydiving) because of the sense of control, and physical/emotional sensations they gain, the aim is to go as close to the edge as possible, return safely and never over it. This requires a significant amount of skill and control, the desire to execute these skills and control is the rationale behind why someone would take such a risk. In this context, why would a white collar worker choose to train and fight in an amateur boxing match? This paper examines how does gender shapes the edgework experience of white-collar boxing.

Drawing from my preliminary analysis of two gender focused focus groups and five individual interviews to examine the ways in which gender operates in the context of WCB the data suggests that although there is not a significant difference in why male and female choose enter into WCB there is a difference in how they the prepare for, execute, and evaluate their performance of a WCB match. These differences produce different edgework experiences both emotionally and physically and play a significant role in determining whether a boxer will continue to fight.
Alexandra Ridgway, “Double Shots, Double Standards: Exploring the experiences of expat women who drink alcohol within the Hong Kong Night-Time Economy”

Sociological research in various Western countries has found that young women who consume alcohol in the post-feminist era navigate a contradictory and dilemmatic night-time drinking space. They receive the message that they are neoliberal agents who are free and encouraged to consume whilst at the same time being fully aware that they are at the risk of being criticised for any digression from being a 'responsible woman' who controls her desires. Women who push the boundaries and challenge these gender-based expectations are often perceived as sexually promiscuous and/or inherently masculine and consequently undesirable. There is a thin line between being a woman who can 'drink with the boys' and who essentialises fun and freedom and one who experiences marginalisation for taking her alcohol consumption 'too far'.

This research study examines whether expat women from Western countries who have relocated to Hong Kong continue to face these contradictory, highly gendered expectations within the Hong Kong night-time drinking scene. Following the drinking journeys of 15 women through observations and interviews has revealed that expat women who have moved to Hong Kong are unable to escape the contradictions of female alcohol consumption and continue to face behavioural dilemmas in spite of their new cultural context. The research further found that, within the Hong Kong context, these expectations are either self-imposed or applied by an expat peer network which surrounds and consequently influences the women.

Denise Tse-Shang Tang, “Perspectives of Same-Sex Sexualities and Self-Harm Among Service Providers and Teachers in Hong Kong”

This research investigates the perspectives of service providers working with Chinese lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youth in Hong Kong secondary schools, and maps the relations among same-sex sexualities, religion, education and self-harm. Sixteen service providers, including secondary school teachers, social workers based on and off school sites, and lesbian/transgender activists working in non-governmental organisations serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, were subjected to in-depth interviews using a qualitative approach. In addition, extensive participant observation was carried out as part of fieldwork. A grounded theory approach was adopted to code the data, as themes emerged with each successive round of coding. The research findings highlight four main themes: obstructive barriers to discussing sexuality at school; the effects of personal disinclination and religion; lesbian and gay youth being perceived as especially susceptible to self-harm; and the similarities in perceptions of self-harmers and LGB youth. The findings
suggest that conservative religious beliefs at both the personal and structural levels act as a deterrent to providing counselling and mental health services that are supportive of LBG youth in Hong Kong.