

Logo by Natasha Bowen
ikizzer@hotmail.com



UK SEX WORK RESEARCH HUB

SWR HUB Newsletter Issue 2

June 2016

Our New Look!

Welcome to the UK Sex Work Research Hub Newsletter. We will share information about research, community activities and events related to sex work in the UK and beyond.

The [Sex Work Research Hub](#) is now housed at the University of York in the Department of Sociology!

Breaking News

Amnesty International releases its long awaited policy statement about sex work. They come out in support of the evidence and call for the decriminalization of sex work, with a policy “grounded in the principles of harm reduction, gender equality, recognition of the personal agency of sex workers, and general international human rights principles”(pg.2). See the full policy entitled [AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL POLICY ON STATE OBLIGATIONS TO RESPECT, PROTECT AND FULFIL THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS](#)

“I’m so excited to be part of the UK Sex Work Research Hub and its new administrator and research support person. I will be dedicating 10 hours a month to strengthening the global network and sharing information among sex workers, academics and community stakeholders!”

*- Raven Bowen
PhD Student,
University of York*



Thanks [BASIS](#), Carrie Reichardt & Karen Wydler The Treatment Rooms Collective for the HUB image.

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'Women Who Buy Sex in the UK' Conference Summary

By Raven Bowen

Doctor [Sarah Kingston](#) hosted 'Women Who Buy Sexual Services in the UK' end of project event on April 14th, 2016. Sarah is a lecturer at Lancaster University, whose interests include sex work policy, law and community impacts. My interest in the conference was peaked when my associate from Canada, Maxime Durocher emailed to say that he was presenting. The conference was worth the 8-hour round trip journey from York that began at 530am! The Lancaster House Hotel on Green Lane was a divine setting.



Sarah welcomed the nearly 20 of us and introduced the speakers for the day beginning with [Professor John Scott](#) of Queensland University of Technology in Australia who presented on male sex work in Australia. John addressed the group through Skype™ conducted a global survey of male escorts in 2003 and shared insights from his new book entitled [Male Sex Work and Society](#) (2014). He discussed that less than 0.1% of women reportedly bought sex at that time and male workers were invisible. John offered a chronology of male sex workers (MSWs) in Australia beginning in the 1950s, when they were seen as gay or transgender. In

the 1960s MSWs were viewed as hustlers and rent boys—who were characterized as heterosexual victims of gay men. The 1980s brought with it a medical approach to understanding MSWs. At that point, John explains that epidemiology and HIV research dominated the landscape wherein hustlers, were viewed as vectors of disease who brought HIV across to heterosexual populations because they included men who identified as being bisexual. The technology of the 1990s moved male sex work from more public locations to online venues and by 2010 sites like Rentboy.com were 'receiving more hits than the Australian National airline.'

My friend and fellow Canadian [Maxime Durocher](#) was next to speak. For him, sex work was a career choice after being downsized from a Directorship at a multinational corporation. At risk of this sounding like an ad, Maxime only provides sexual services to women and believes that every woman should have the opportunity to experience orgasm and have a full and healthy sex lives. He discussed the unique ways in which he markets himself and maintains and online presence. Maxime also fields his fair share of inquiries and dispels myths for men who are interested in doing sex work. Some men just post an ad and hope that a woman will respond so that they can have sex! As a consummate professional, Maxime shared that some of the less obvious skills needed for the job include being a good listener and the ability to find something 'pleasant' in each and every woman.



[Margaret Corvid](#), a professional dominatrix, journalist and activist, described her experiences of providing services to women and couples. Although women comprise less than 5% of her clientele Margaret sees busy cis-gendered women who want convenient kink, who need privacy and who may be shy or sexually marginalized.

Additionally, she provides services to trans* nonconforming men who need a safe space to perform their gender. She argues that since sex work is criminalized, women buyers have a lot to lose and this is unfortunate in part because women are expected to be deprioritized and suppress their sexuality in society.

'Women who buy sex have been excluded from research and the political discourse about the consumption of sex.'

-Dr. Sanders-McDonagh

Her buying tips included meeting clients at hotel rooms only. With respect to providing services to women and couples, Charlotte stated that women are not prudish and they want to explore their sexuality. She listed a number of workshops that she offers to women to learn skills and tips and this issue with our state not offering sex education to primary school children.

Last to guest speak via Skype™ was [Dr. Erin Sanders-McDonagh](#) from Middlesex University. She discussed female sex tourism in Thailand and Amsterdam. More specifically women's consumption of live sex shows such as ping-pong shows, in which they outnumber men. In countries where lady-boy performances are listed in tour guide books as family entertainment, Erin explained that women performers at these shows project ping-pongs, razors, birds, fish, and other items out of their vaginas in bars. Women (Mostly Dutch, and North Americans) on vacation attend these events in groups. She examines the presence of women in these 'masculine spaces' and explores their consumption of sexual entertainment. She interviewed women in situ and they described sex workers and performing as objects. Unfortunately, where stigma appears alive and well even among women consumers. Erin suggests that women who attend these performances need to be 'given a vocabulary' in order to describe and contextualize their engagement. We await her forthcoming book entitled *Women and Sex Tourism Landscapes (2016)*.



Dr. Sarah Kingston rounded out the day sharing findings from her research project. She states that women who buy sex have been excluded from research and the political discourse about the consumption of sex. Men share sex buying with friends, women are expected to be chaste. Sarah also stated that the general public see women as victims, so there is little support or tips for women buyers. Contact Sarah for more information and have a look at some [recent media articles](#).

Overall, this conference was very informative and brought together an eclectic group of researchers and sex workers who engaged in lively discussion during the conference and breaks. I could not stay for the dinner and the tour of Lancaster castle, but I expect that a good time was had by all.

Thank you and good luck to Dr. Sarah Kingston on reshaping the discourse round the purchase of sexual services!

21 Questions in 21 Minutes

Welcome to 21 questions in 21 minutes, a column that highlights members of the UK Sex Work Research Hub. We will get to know the sex work rights community of sex workers, clients, managers/third parties, researchers, writers, theorists, activists, performers and agitators! Interviews are timed and participants are encouraged to say the first thing that comes to mind.

Prof. Maggie O'Neill Gets a Grilling



1. What do you do? *I'm a [Chair in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at York](#) and I am co-chair of the Sex Work Research Hub.*

2. Favorite Color? *Green! I like grass green, Emerald and I like red. Although red and green should never be seen! I like red and green together.*

3. One thing that you are most proud of? *Oh, can I have two...okay, my boys. I'm very proud of my boys. And as a feminist when I had boys I thought it was divine retribution but they are really great men and feminist men. And I'm also really proud of the work I've done around sex work, migration and the collaborations*

4. Why the sex industry? *I was invited to do a piece of research on 'prostitution' in Nottingham funded by Home Office 'Safe Cities Money' in 1989 the focus was to improve safety in certain Northern cities. I took what I called 'woman centered' approach and spoke to sex workers about their experiences of first hand then other agencies. I met an outreach worker, Karen Hughes, who was working on her own to provide outreach to sex workers and she also created a sexual health drop-in center in Nottingham for all people including sex workers. The research led to what I think was the first multi agency forum that included sex workers as equal partners in 1990. Sex workers said 'don't think you can just come out and take from us and go off and build your career!' What a fantastic entry into empirical research! It's a knowledge transfer, you're facilitating you're not owning it. I got to participatory action research through that model.*

5. Last thing you laughed about? *Yesterday, in a workshop with migrant girls. The project is looking at what it's like to live in London for migrant girls and Mothers. The project combines walking and theatre-based methods and we had a fun finale to the workshop with girls, they did a catwalk in the hall to play different characters and were playing/acting as 'bad girls', 'good girls', 'nerdy girls', 'strict moms' and we all laughed. They were so amazing!*

6. Favorite food? *Um, that's a hard one. Chocolate and haloumi. But not together. Haloumi salad.*

7. Current project or pursuit? *The Sex work project, Hidden Lives of Female Sex Workers in Teesside. It's participatory action research, peer-led. Women have interviewed other women about their lives and we are currently analyzing and the report will be launched on the 15th of July in Durham. So it's kind of a [Centre for Sex, Gender and Sexuality](#) legacy project.*

8. Biggest regret? *Well I don't really do regrets but I wish I had spent more time with my kids when they were young.*

9. Facebook or Twitter? *Twitter, I love Twitter!*

10. What challenges you the most in your sex work related activities? *Definitely the tension between academia and sex work. The power around who gets heard. If I could wave a magic wand it would be to flatten that, so I think what we do is use it and make sure that at every opportunity, if you're doing something academic it must be collaborative -the participatory action research model is helpful. I hope the Sex Work HUB can build on that. Sex workers say 'Nothing about us without us.'*

11. Favorite movie? *It's called '[Silence](#)' and it's by an Irish filmmaker called Pat Collins and his wife Sharon Whooley.*

12. Last time you cried? *Yesterday (May 19th) after the workshop for girls. They were talking about family life and how their parents worked really hard and other struggles. Doing Theatre methods can remind you or bring to the fore things that you haven't thought about for a long time. So what made me cry was an experience of stigma, of racial and class stigma. I was reminded about this moment with my mum when she was being interviewed about money for our school uniforms. I was about 10 [years old] and this man treated my mum like the dirt under his feet. And so, I cried yesterday on the way to the tube station, being reconnected to that feeling—the humiliation she experienced and being connected to the stigma of class politics. And of course that is then the fuel for my work. It drives me.*

21 in 21 cont.

13. Are you a cat or a dog person? *Dog! Totally Dog!*

14. Who understands you? *Oh, I'm not sure who gets me. I think Steve [husband] probably gets me! Hopefully, yeah. And my kids do...I think so, I'm not sure!*

15. Last book or article you read? *So the last book I read [Bad Blood: A Walk Along the Irish Border](#) by [Colm Tóibín](#) who walked the Irish border during the troubles. It really gives you a good insight into sectarian politics.*

16. Childhood fear? Spiders. I like them now...

17. What did your last text say? *"I'm here Raven"*

18. One thing that your work is aimed to do for the sex industry? *Decriminalization, you know we need people to challenge the law and we have great lawyers in the HUB. I think in the HUB we have all of the necessary partners to bring together to really go for decriminalization.*

19. Meaning of life (One Word)? *Relationships.*

20. What's the last thing you googled? *'Premier Inn free wifi' because I was staying at premier Inn in London.*

21. What did/do you want to be when you grow/grew up? *Well I did want to be an air hostess but then I got put off from working at Pizza Hut. But actually what I would really like to be is a filmmaker!*

Please Note: If you would like to be my next victim, or know someone who should, drop me a line. Also if you have any interesting questions that you think should be asked to future interviewees, send them along to rorb500@york.ac.uk

Recent/Upcoming Projects, Conferences, Blogs and Events...

* **Symposium on Sex Work, De-criminalization and Social Justice** September 14th, 2016 Hosted by the Sex Work Research Hub, at the University of York. Key Note Speaker Assoc. Professor Gillian Abel of the University of Otago, Christchurch New Zealand. **More details to follow**

* **[Beyond the Gaze](#)** research project continues to interview sex workers about new ICT technologies, their practices and trends in the sex industry, towards improved health and safety.

BEYOND THE GAZE

* View **Toni Mac's** TedxEastEnd on **['The laws that sex workers really want.'](#)**

* Prof **John Scott**, co-editors of **Make Sex Work and Society**, have launched a new website on male escorti Please see **www.aboutmaleescorting.com**

* The **[Sex Workers' Opera](#)** May 17th—29, 2016 performances received rave reviews. Well done ladies!

* **The Anti-Stigma-Workshop** hosted by **[Sex Workers Open University](#)** (SWOU), **[SCOT PEP](#)** and **[Umbrella Lane](#)** followed by a Social with Food and Music —May 27th 2:30pm to 11pm was a great success!

* **[What do Sex Worker's Want?](#)** Film night! June 3rd 7pm, **[Umbrella Lane](#)**, **[Scot-PEP](#)** and **[SWOU](#)** hosted film night in Glasgow and featured Soy negra, soy marica, soy puta (I'm black, i' m queer, i'm a whore) by Hugo Meijer and Cas van der Pas, Becky's Journey by Sine Plambech and o sex workers want? Sex worker and activist Toni Mac.

“Women Involved in Street Sex Work in the UK: an analysis of service need and provision” Research Project

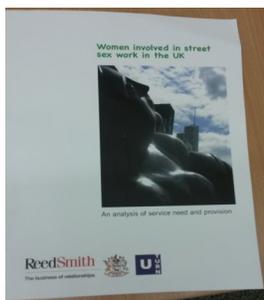
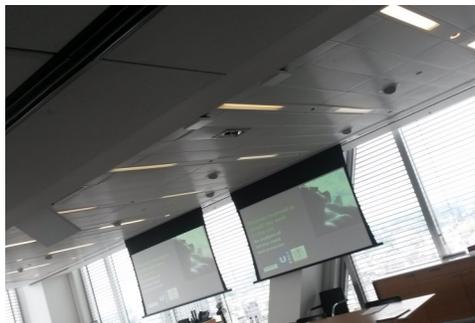
By Raven Bowen

This Reed Smith funded project conference took place at the beautiful but slightly nauseating 32nd floor of Broadgate Tower. There was a fantastic lunch, with real juice and floor to ceiling windows.

Rio Vella Founder and Director of [U-Turn Women's Project](#), inspired research into the lived experiences of women who reside and do sex work at London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Islington.

Researchers interviewed 13 women and nine service providers, finding that women would benefit from the decriminalization of sex work; expanded outreach and well-funded support services; meaningful

leisure and vocational activities (to combat boredom and build skills); healthy and safe housing options; i.e. women-only residences; and a mentorship project where former sex workers provided insight and support.



Dr. Erin Sanders-McDonagh, guest speaker, discussed [Women's Open Space Project Evaluation: Final Report](#), a study she conducted with Dr. Lucy Neville in 2012. This report similarly found that women felt isolated and needed practical support to combat poverty, insecure housing situations and other issues. Erin remarked that although women share issues that challenge them and reports are written to bring awareness, very little has changed in the last four years.

Download the 2016 *Women Involved in Street Sex Work in the UK* full report, legal review

In the Spotlight: Help Keep SCOT-PEP Fighting for Justice

Do you believe sex workers' rights are human rights? In the past year, SCOT-PEP volunteers have:

- * Worked with Jean Urquhart MSP on bringing decriminalisation and the New Zealand model to Scotland. SCOT-PEP is working on the next stage and campaigning for the return of women's money and phones after police raids.
- * Defeated MSP Rhoda Grant's amendment to the Human Trafficking Bill (Scotland), on the criminalisation of the purchase of sex.
- * Translated our bust card (how to manage unwanted "welfare visits" from the police for indoor sex workers) into Polish, French, Russian, Thai and Portuguese.
- * Provided alliance-building with Poverty Alliance, HIV Scotland and LGBT Youth and regular press and research briefings.
- * Represented sex workers on key groups - Cross Party Group on Human Trafficking, Edinburgh Violence Against Women.
- * Worked a film project about our decriminalisation campaign, with feminist film maker and artist Petra Bauer.
- * Planning to meet with Police Scotland over our grave concerns about heavy law enforcement in Aberdeen and the devastating death of [Jessica McGraa](#).

To Donate click [HERE](#) **Keep up-to-date** with our [Campaign](#) **Follow us on Twitter** [@ScotPep](#)

Kudos

⇒ To Professor Maggie O'Neill for winning a Chair position at the University of York Department of Sociology!

⇒ To Dr. Teela Sanders on earning a Professorship at the University of Leicester

⇒ To Dr. Tracey Sagar on earning a Professorship at Swansea University

New and Forthcoming Publications, Calls for Papers

Call for Papers:

- ◆ The Centre for Criminological Research at the University of Sheffield is hosting a one day symposium on child sexual exploitation on "[Learning from Rotherham and Beyond](#)" on the 8th July 2016. Keynote Speakers: Dr Alan Billings, South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Dr Carlene Firmin, Senior Research Fellow, University of Bedfordshire, Esella Hawkey, Producer, BBC Panorama. Contact Maggie Wykes m.wykes@sheffield.ac.uk

Publications:

- ◆ [Hoefinger, Heidi](#) (2016) 'Media, Sex and the Self in Cambodia.' Book chapter in *Cultural Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Asia*, Tiantian Zheng (ed.), Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- ◆ Sanders, T. and Hardy, K. (2014) *Flexible workers: labour, regulation and the political economy of the stripping industry* www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415679183
- ◆ Cooper, E. (2016) *It's better than daytime television': questioning the socio-spatial impacts of massage parlours on residential communities* <http://sex.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/05/27/1363460715616949.short>
- ◆ Cunningham, S. *Reinforcing or Challenging Stigma? The Risks and Benefits of 'Dignity Talk' in Sex Work Discourse*. International Journal for the Semiotics of Law, March 2016, Volume 29, Issue 1, pp45 - 65. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11196-015-9434-9>

Scottish Prostitution Law Reform Consultation Results

By Stewart Cunningham

A public consultation on proposed Prostitution Law Reform (Scotland) Bill took place towards the end of 2015. The proposal for a Bill was lodged in the Scottish Parliament by Jean Urquhart MSP, who worked very closely with SCOT-PEP to ensure that the proposals reflected the needs and demands of sex workers. Broadly, the Bill proposed the repeal of soliciting, kerb-crawling, brothel-keeping and 'living on the earnings' laws and the adoption of a legal framework based on the New Zealand model.

The results of the consultation were released in March 2016 and showed strong support for the proposals. **70%** of respondents supported the general aims of the Bill, to decriminalise sex work, and **60%** felt that the New Zealand model was a legislative framework that Scotland should adopt. There was almost universal support for the repeal of soliciting laws and **72%** of respondents thought that small groups of sex workers should be able to work collectively from indoor premises. There was less certainty from respondents about a licensing regime for larger brothels and how this should work in practice. The proposal fell at the dissolution of Parliament but SCOT-PEP is working hard to see it re-introduced in the coming session. Please see the [FULL REPORT](#)

Summary of “4th Postgraduate Sex Work Conference: Sex Work Research Hub/Yorkshire Academic Sex Work Consortium, University of Leeds” January 12th 2016

By Professor Teela Sanders

University of Leeds was proud to host the fourth biannual postgraduate sex work conference as a Sex Work Research Hub event. Attended by some thirty delegates and eight students presenting their work, the day was a success in several ways. Firstly, we heard from exciting and new research activities from students in the UK and beyond, with Raven Bowen and Menaka Raguparan providing a Canadian context for empirical research. The day was kicked off with Dr Kate Brown (University of York) who gave a jovial but ‘real’ reflection on doing a PhD, with the apt title ‘*PhD as finishing line, starting point and process*’. This really helped frame the baseline of (mostly) doctoral students in the audience, demonstrating that the journey of research does not end with the final thesis but carries on. Kate imparted some clear and focused advice, showing there are paths through what seems like a relentless uphill struggle at times. A variety of sex work settings and sex workers experiences were discussed throughout the day, with reflections on being a student stripper from Jessica Simpson (City University), and the complexities of adult film performers who enter a sexual health setting from Greg King (Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust).

The theme of identity was also present in several presentations, including Raven Bowen’s (Durham University) dissection of the intersection between sex work and ‘square work’. Menaka Raguparan (Carleton University, Ottawa) gave an enlightening paper on a seldom yet vital topic of race in sex work, looking at racial hierarchies amongst indoor sex workers of colour in Canadian brothels. The afternoon sessions focused on some methodological reflections from a male researcher interviewing indoor sex workers in Wales, as Samuel Hanks (Cardiff University) reflected upon access, ethics and the research relationship. Rachel Stuart (University of Kent) and Helen Rand (Essex University) brought the conference up to speed with the rapid changes that digital technologies and the internet has presented for the sex industry, including the range of laws that could possibly be used to regulate online sex work from Helen, and a dissection of the world of webcamming by Rachel. Laura Jarvis-King (University of Leeds) gave an intriguing theoretical introduction to her PhD ‘The management and negotiation of time in sex worker-client relationships’, showing that there is space for a range of middle range theories to ask further questions of sex work context and relationships. The conference was filled with respectful questions and discussions, sharing ideas and networking beyond the event for future support and activities. Thanks for Scarlett Redman for assisting on the day and for everyone for making the long and tiresome journey to Leeds. The next PG conference is scheduled for 2018 at the latest. For more information contact t.l.m.sanders@leeds.ac.uk

‘The conference was filled with respectful questions and discussions, sharing ideas and networking beyond the event for future support and activities.’

-Professor Teela Sanders

The 4th Postgraduate Sex Work Conference: From the perspective of a Presenter

By Menaka Raguparan (Carleton University, Ottawa)

I recently [January 12th 2016] had the pleasure of presenting and participating at the 4th Postgraduate Sex Work Conference, hosted by Dr. Teela Saunders at University of Leeds. This conference was part of the Sex Work Research Hub networking activities, supported by the members of the Yorkshire Academic Sex Work Consortium. I am PhD Candidate with ABD standing from the Law and Legal Studies program at Carleton University, Canada. Overall I had a very rewarding experience. It was amazing to be part of a truly fantastic community of people who are passionate about sex workers' lived experiences. It was energizing to hear about the wide variety of on-going research in the UK on the topic of Sex Work. The specificity in which the conference delegates frame their research is indicative of the immense contribution to the academia and for the industry. Understanding the dualities of sex work and square work (Bowen), and understating the effects of stigma on University students who work in the Sex/adult Industry (Simpson) illustrates the value of recognizing and validating lived experiences. Exploring and highlighting the intersections between time management and relationship building (Jarvis-King), in my opinion brings out the entrepreneurial nature of sex work. It is not only fascinating to understanding the operation of sex/adult industry in the digital era (Rand), including webcamming (Stuart), but I feel that the knowledge sex workers will gain from this information will have a direct correlation to their capital and political gain. I am always impressed by the thought provoking research conducted by health practitioners (King) and Sex work advocates (Hanks). Last, but not least, the keynote speech by Dr. Kate Brown was informative and reaffirming – that this journey of PhD will eventually come to a rewarding end.



This conference was an ideal venue for me to present my PhD research. The atmosphere in the room was definitely more supportive and accepting of my claim than some main stream conferences in which I have presented. Throughout the day, I felt the support of an engaged community who had come together to ask thought provoking questions and really connect around ideas and methods. I have two favourite moments from the conference: first, meeting and interacting with some of the stars in the field of sex work research – Dr. Maggie O'Neill, Dr. Teela Saunders and Rosie Campbell and second, meeting so many fellow PhDs. I immensely value the time I spent talking and share stories about our research, our supervisors and general life as doctoral students researching a highly controversial topic.

I want to thank Dr. Sanders for hosting one of the most spirited and engaging conference that I have been to!



Support Sex Work Organizing!

Give generously to organizations that do work by, for and with sex workers —who survive with very few resources.

- ◇ To Support **ScotPEP** —A Scottish Organization that promotes health, dignity, inclusion and social justice for sex workers. [View Site](#)
- ◇ To Support **Umbrella Lane** —A Glasgow sex worker service with goals to creating a non-judgmental resource that shares information to support the health safety and wellbeing of sex workers. [Contact Them](#)

Next Issue:

- ◆ Our next issue will be available in Fall 2016
- ◆ If you have any content for submission in the next newsletter, would like your activities highlighted, or have ideas for future editions, please send them along to Raven Bowen at rorb500@york.ac.uk by **September 30th 2016**.

Thanks Again!

- ◆ We Thank [BASIS](#), Carrie Reichardt & Karen Wydler for the use of their mural!
- ◆ And We Thank Natasha Bowen for the creation of our new Hub logo!
ikizzer@hotmail.com

SWR HUB Newsletter Issue 2

UNIVERSITY *of* York



[@sexworkreshub](#)

Fun Facts: Sex Workers in History



'[Theodora from the brothel](#)' married Emperor Justinian and became a Byzantine Empress, ruling over the Eastern Roman Empire!

Read more about her in Lynda Garland's [Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527-1204](#)

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Contact The HUB

Sex Work Research Hub
Department of Sociology
University of York,
Heslington,
YO10 5DD

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