

Postgraduate Biannual Sex Work Conference

Thursday 16 January 2014

Beechgrove House, University of Leeds

Draft Conference Programme

Organising Committee:

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Beechgrove House, University of Leeds

09.30-10 Registration and Refreshments

09:50-10.00 *Welcome* **Dr Teela Sanders**, University of Leeds

10.00-11:00 Session 1

A Tale of Two Cities: A Comparison of the Experiences of Stigma between Sex Workers in Nottingham and Cape Town **Lucy Binch**, Sheffield University and **Daniela Scotece**, POW

Sex Worker Union Organising in the UK and France **Jenny Webber**, Ruskin College, Oxford

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:30 Session 2

(Re)Imagining the Researcher (Re)Discovering the 'Other' **Gemma Aherne**, Leeds Metropolitan University

The Cash Nexus: Experiences of Money, Worth, and Price for Men who Sell Sex to Men **Allan Tyler**, London South Bank University

12:30-12:40 Announcements

UKNSWP Special Library Collection

Yorkshire Academic Sex Work Consortium

PG Network

12:40-13:30 Lunch, The Refectory (adjacent to the Student Union)

13:30-15:00 Session 3

Contextualising Direct Sex Work: Labour Processes in Diverse Indoor Settings **Jane Pitcher**, Loughborough University

Multiple Faces and Liminal Spaces: Exploring the Tension between Real and Perceived Impacts of Massage Parlours on Everyday Life **Emily Cooper**,
Lancaster University

Precarious Intimacies – Migrant Sex Workers in Helsinki **Niina Vuolajärvi**,
Rutgers State University New Jersey, University of Eastern Finland

15:00-15:15 Refreshments

15:15-15:45 Panel Discussion: Economic and Social Changes: How have they affected the sex industry? Dr Mary Laing (Northumbria University); Rosie Campbell (Genesis Leeds / Durham University); Teela Sanders

15:45-16:00 Close **Dr Teela Sanders**, University of Leeds

Venue and Directions:

Seminar Room, Beech Grove House, University of Leeds

The venue is directly opposite the University of Leeds student union building

Please click here for a campus map. Beech Grove house is marked in the scrolling menu on the right. The number on the key is 33

Conference Abstracts

(Re)Imagining the Researcher (Re)Discovering the 'Other'

Gemma Aherne, Leeds Metropolitan University

"The twelve jurors were all writing very busily on slates. "What are they doing?" Alice whispered to the Gryphon. "They can't have anything to put down yet, before the trial's begun" (Carroll, 2009: 95).

This paper will discuss my initial research into 'Sex Workers' Experiences of Prison: From Punishment to Exiting?' focusing on my methodological considerations. Drawing upon personal experience of working in the sex industries, this paper will focus on the researcher and the (re) imagining of their role in a way that best (re)discovers the constructed 'Other' and themselves as researcher. By using creative methods which provoke reflexivity from both researcher and participant, a space is opened where both parties facilitate the other in producing new knowledge. The paper will discuss creative methods such as photo ethnography and auto ethnography, to focus upon participants as co researchers.

A Tale of Two Cities: A Comparison of the Experiences of Stigma between Sex Workers in Nottingham and Cape Town

Lucy Binch, Sheffield University and **Daniela Scotece, POW**

Identity is intrinsic to everyone; it is what defines us from one another as people and is therefore central to our everyday lives and realities. We all have multiple identities and when one of those is 'sex worker' or 'prostitute' other identities may become strained ultimately affecting one's own concept of self. The stigmas, stereotypes and myths traditionally associated with those who sell sex impact on the lived experiences, daily choices and realities of those who choose to work within the sex industry and can have a detrimental effect on both the sex workers themselves and their families. This presentation provides an insight into some of the challenges faced by those who work within the sex market by using a series of qualitative interviews to compare the experiences of sex workers from the cities Nottingham and Cape Town where the arena of prostitution is very different but the stigma felt by those who sell sex remains largely the same.

Sex Worker Union Organising in the UK and France

Jenny Webber, Ruskin College Oxford

Sex workers have been organising for their rights all over the world for decades within a variety of legal frameworks. In most countries some or all forms of sex work are illegal or semi-legal, but sex workers have found different models of organisation within these legal frameworks. It is only relatively recently that sex workers have formed alliances with unions or joined official unions. This paper compares the experiences of sex worker union organisation in France and the UK. In the UK, GMB, a large general union with around 650,000 members in all sectors, opened the Adult Entertainment branch, bringing sex workers into trade union membership for the first time in the UK in March 2002. The branch recruited in several sectors of the industry: prostitution, pornography, dancing, adult chat lines, among others. In France sex worker activists formed STRASS – Syndicat du TRAvail Sexuel – in 2009, as a small independent union that only organises with sex workers. It has over 500 members. STRASS is not affiliated to any of the big national trade union (TU) centres in France.

Research on sex worker union organisation has mainly focused on the reasons why sex workers join trades unions and on evaluating the potential of sex work unionisation (West, 2000; Gall 2006 and 2007). However, there is a lack of detailed research focusing on how trade unions have coped with sex worker membership and the extent of their ability to meet the organisational needs of sex workers or to integrate them within the general membership of the union. This paper seeks to address this gap in the literature. We argue that sex worker union organising is a good illustration of the barriers and benefits; can illustrate the problems and benefits of an inclusive and innovative attitude to organising with a small and peripheral group of vulnerable workers who are highly politicised and challenge 'traditional' union forms. In the current political climate, we argue the importance for unions of accommodating the needs and demands of sex workers, rather than retreating to their core membership. Given that the sex workers interviewed generally gave their motivation for joining a union was: a) to gain legitimacy in the fight for decriminalisation and to be accepted as workers with workers' rights and; b) to network and gain solidarity and support it was important to evaluate the extent to which unions have been able or can be able to satisfy these needs. We conclude that as an independent union STRASS has been in a better position to capture the full potential of sex worker activism, and we offer some recommendations for the GMB and any other unions that may in future organise with sex workers.

This paper is based on two pieces of research carried out in two different periods in time. Firstly, an action research project carried out between 2000 and 2006 that had as its core objective the unionisation of sex workers in the UK. In the course of the project, thirty semi-structured ethnographic interviews were carried out, as well as participant observation in the sex workers' rights movement and the industry itself.

The action element of the project consisted in setting up an informal association of sex workers and allies in the UK (The International Union of Sex Workers) which subsequently affiliated to the GMB union. Secondly, a research study carried out between 2011 and 2012 that examined the development of sex worker trade union organisation in the UK a decade on, and compared it with the experience of sex worker unionisation in France. The project involved observation, semi-structured interviews with fifteen sex worker GMB members, two GMB officers and a focus group with eight sex worker STRASS members.

Romanian and Bulgarian Male Sex Workers in Berlin- An Overview of the Research Project and Methodological Discussion

Victor Trofimov, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt, Germany

In my paper, I want to present the research on Romanian and Bulgarian male sex workers in Berlin that I have just started. Romanians and Bulgarians currently comprise more than a half of street sex workers in big German cities. Most are Roma who come from economically underprivileged communities and face increasing discrimination in education and at the job market. Romanian and Bulgarian Roma are thought to share a traditional culture and have very “backward” views on masculinity and homosexuality. In my dissertation, I want to find out how the structural inequality might force Roma men to migrate abroad and become sex workers. Moreover, I am interested in a way that Roma men who do sex work in Berlin (for a predominantly male clientèle), manage to negotiate their gender, sexual and also ethnic identities. During the conference, I want to discuss with other participants a number of methodological and practical issues. First, I wonder how I can get access to the field. My present plan in this regard includes doing an internship with a sex workers' project. Second, I want to discuss the methods I should use. I wonder if it makes sense to do participant observation in addition to planned biographical interviews and if yes, which interactions (in bars or in spare time) should I observe and how should I deal with ethical dilemmas that will possibly arise? Third, I am going to address the language issue. Most Roma male sex workers do not speak sufficient German, while I do not speak Romanian, Bulgarian or Turkish. Would it make sense to hire an interpreter and how does his or her presence will affect research? Or is it necessary for me to learn the language that members of the immigrant community speak?

The Cash Nexus: Experiences of Money, Worth, and Price for Men who Sell Sex to Men

Allan Tyler, London South Bank University

This paper focuses on 'The Cash Nexus', the receipt of specific payments in the exchange of sex. Using data collected from interviews with 18 men who sell sex to men in London and print and online advertisements from 1991 to the present, I examine some of the ways that money structures the narratives of men who sell sex to men. Deconstructing binaries of need and want as relative constructs, interviews illustrate that men describe Scarcity (Brown 2012) regardless of their socio-economic position. This helps to lead the discourse away from binaries of agency and structure towards repertoires of Priorities and Application, or in the words of informants, 'Easy Money'. After outlining some of the strategies reported for setting prices and collecting fees, I explore how income is managed in the short and medium term and where there are tensions in the 'Easy Money' ideal. Finally, I offer recommendations for individuals and organisations interested in understanding the rationale of men selling sex, decreasing the gaps and tensions between men's long term expectations and outcomes and operationalizing increased future capital.

Contextualising Direct Sex Work: Labour Processes in Diverse Indoor Settings

Jane Pitcher, Loughborough University

Recognition of commercial sex as a form of work remains contested in the policy context. In recent years, however, academic attention has turned to the complexities of sex as work, and the skills and emotional labour deployed by sex workers, particularly in indoor-based sex work (e.g. Sanders, 2005; Brents et al, 2010). Discussions have related primarily to female sex workers, and there has been less consideration of different forms of labour across indoor structures and the way in which male, as well as female sex workers approach their work in these settings. Drawing on a recent qualitative study of female, male and transgender sex workers in different indoor settings in Great Britain, this paper will explore diverse labour processes and forms of work organisation. I discuss labour requirements across managed and independent forms of sex work and the way in which different sex workers negotiate their position within an informal and unregulated industry. I explore how participants situate sex work in relation to other precarious service sector occupations, and develop strategies to manage their work and balance commercial and private identities as a means of self-protection and resistance to stigma. I locate the analysis within the wider context of gendered labour and consider the extent to which the work setting and external factors such as the legal context and dominant policy discourses influence sex workers' levels of job satisfaction and workplace autonomy.

Multiple Faces and Liminal Spaces: Exploring the Tension between Real and Perceived Impacts of Massage Parlours on Everyday Life

Emily Cooper, Lancaster University

It is well-documented that the sex industry, and particularly prostitution, is frequently contested. The conflicts that arise generate multi-faceted social and spatial exclusion, the othering of individuals involved in the profession and, often, a desire to disperse prostitution from communities. As a result, the notion of offence – and to what extent the presence of prostitution offends – has been significant in the formation of both legislative and social norms and orders, and is directly linked to its impacts on communities. Research has shown that connotations of sex work establishments/streets, sex workers and clients with dirt, disgust, decay and crime (as examples) occur as a result of its stigmatised and othered identity, with dirt and disorder being particularly prominent in descriptions of why it offends (Hubbard et al 2013; Crofts 2010; Hubbard and Sanders 2003). However, as Prior (2013) states, “offence” is both diffuse and ambiguous and, furthermore, there is a complex relationship between real and perceived impacts (Hubbard et al 2013) of sex premises on communities. Using research conducted with communities living and working in close proximity to massage parlours in Blackpool, this paper will argue that the boundary between real and perceived impacts is not only diffuse, but its diffusivity is affected by the various roles of the parlours in everyday life. It will also serve to unpick some of the rather homogenous depictions (Crofts 2010) of massage parlours, their ability to “offend” and of their roles in everyday socio-spatial behaviour; depictions of them by residents were actually rather ambivalent.

Precarious Intimacies – Migrant Sex Workers in Helsinki

Niina Vuolajärvi, Rutgers State University New Jersey, University of Eastern Finland

In my paper, I present preliminary findings of my ethnographic PhD research among migrant sex workers in Helsinki, Finland. In the course of the 18 month fieldwork, I visited two night clubs and participated in the bi-weekly drop-ins at the social and health service provider Pro Centre. Apart from my participant observations, I interviewed 35 migrant sex workers of various nationalities, 20 national sex workers, 20 social workers and health care professionals working with sex workers, as well as 2 policemen. The paper at issue, is mainly based on my participant observations and fieldnotes. The theoretical framework of the project combines migration and precarization research perspectives to the inquiries of sexualities, sexual labor and commercial sexual services. In the analysis, I lay emphasis on the immigration and

labour market policies as a simultaneously restrictive and enabling structural background for different forms of migrant (sexual) labour. In the paper, I will first give an overview of the institutional and legal framework regulating prostitution in Finland and discuss shortly the recent political debates around prostitution in Finland together with their consequences to the street and bar workers of Helsinki. Then, I will turn to the ethnic segregation of the sex market and examine the role of immigration regulation in producing precarity. Lastly I will open the intertwining of intimacy and precarity in the lives of the migrant sex workers I met in Helsinki.

Biographies of Presenters

Gemma Aherne

After starting a self funded PhD at LJMU researching Lap-dancing, Emotion & Affect using auto ethnography and photo ethnography, I was awarded a scholarship at Leeds Met to begin in October 2013. The provisional title of my project is '**Sex workers' Experiences of Prison: from Punishment to Exiting?**'. Having worked in the sex industry myself, my aim is to focus on the voice of the workers to minimise harm and to maximise potential knowledge and complex understandings of the field. My research interests cluster under the regulation of the female body, and include whiteness and the 'chav'; excess; celebrity; stigma; deviance; exclusion; disgust; emotions.

Lucy Binch

Lucy Binch is a PhD candidate at the University of Sheffield based in the law department. She is currently engaged in qualitative research focusing on how sex workers in the UK manage their everyday identities with the challenges of their working lives. Her thesis will explore how those who choose to work within the sex industry feel labeling and popular stereotypes affect them both personally and professionally with particular emphasis on the notion of stigma.

Daniela Scotece

Daniela Scotece is a former practicing solicitor with seven years experience of criminal law and working with individuals involved in the criminal justice system, she has been involved with POW since 2010 and engaged in her current role as Development Manager since June 2011. POW Nottingham is a peer founded project launched in 1989 that works with individuals involved in, affected by, or at risk of becoming involved in prostitution.

Jenny Webber

Jenny is a retired Trade Union education officer of the GMB union, which has a branch for sex workers: The London Adult Entertainment Branch. She completed her MA in International Labour and Trade Union Studies at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 2012, where her dissertation was - Sex Worker Trade Union Organising, Activism and Practice: a study of two unions in France and UK.

Jenny is a life-long activist and feminist, working within the union to support and promote the equality agenda, in particular women's self-organisation. Most of her working life was spent as a gardener and Local Authority worker and activist. She is currently working with Ana Lopes - who originally set up the International Union of Sex Workers and subsequently the GMB branch as part of her action research PhD thesis. This paper comes out of the two research projects.

Victor Trofimov

Victor is a PhD student in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Cultural Sciences of the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), Germany. In his dissertation project he is doing an ethnographic research among Romanian and Bulgarian male sex workers in Berlin. He is particularly interested in motives for migration of sex workers, and how sex work in Germany influences ethnic, gendered and sexual identities of the migrants. Victor's research interests include human trafficking, migration, gender and sexuality, and Southeastern Europe. He holds an MA in Gender Studies (with Distinction) from Central European University in Budapest and a diploma in Translating from Ulyanovsk State University in Russia.

Allan Tyler

Allan is a PhD candidate in my final year at London South Bank University. My supervisors are Prof Jeffery Weeks and Prof Paula Reavey. My research has focused on print advertisements, social networking websites and interviews with men who sell sex and sexual services to men. I draw on theory from sociology, psychology and marketing. I have incorporated ethnography and visual analysis with semi-structured interviews. This chapter is based on one of my later findings chapters.

Jane Pitcher

Jane is undertaking an ESRC-funded PhD at Loughborough University, Dept. of Social Sciences. Her study is entitled 'Prostitution, diversity and sex markets: an occupational study of indoor sex work in Great Britain' and is based on in-depth

interviews with female, male and transgender sex workers, as well as a small number of former sex workers now in management/support roles. The study explores the experiences of adult sex workers in indoor locations in Great Britain and their perceptions of the terms, conditions and nature of their work. Jane has been undertaking research with sex workers for more than ten years. Publications include (with Sanders and O'Neill) Prostitution: sex work, policy and politics, Sage 2009; and (with Campbell, Hubbard, O'Neill and Scoular) Living and working in areas of street sex work: from conflict to coexistence, Policy Press, 2006.

Emily Cooper

I am a final-year PhD student in Human Geography at the Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University. My current research focuses on the impacts of massage parlours on local communities in Blackpool. I spent a year conducting interviews with local residents, businesses, sex workers, Council officers and police officers, and also substantial periods of observation. My research interests generally span the geographies of sex work and how sex, space and society interact; everyday life; stigma; and ethnographic research techniques. I have also recently been contacted to contribute to research on the impacts of adult media distribution.

Niina Vuolajärvi

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