



Women's Studies Research Centre
The University of Hong Kong



ENGENDERING A BUZZ

Winter 2018 (Inaugural) Issue

Dear WSRC members and friends,

It is my great pleasure to share with you the inaugural edition of the WSRC Occasional Newsletter: **ENGENDERING A BUZZ!**

From this month onwards, in order to keep all our members, supporters and partners up to date with our research activities, including conferences, lunch talks and other events and publications, we will be sending out this Newsletter from time to time. The Newsletter will contain details of WSRC's recent initiatives and projects and other happenings at HKU and beyond in the world of gender, diversity, inclusion and equality. We also hope to include here excerpts from the WSRC Blog which will be launching soon. If you are leading any initiatives or research at HKU related to gender, diversity, inclusion and equality, whether it is an upcoming event, research project or publication which you think may be of interest to our subscribers, we would be delighted to hear from you and start a conversation and feature your work. This applies to students and staff! Please drop us a line at womensrc@hku.hk!

Our hope is that these updates will serve as a useful channel through which to keep you all up to date with recent activities at WSRC and present opportunities for your engagement and collaboration with the Centre. As we launch this inaugural edition, we warmly welcome your comments, feedback and suggestions on **ENGENDERING A BUZZ!**

**Warmest regards for a joyous holiday season,
Puja Kapai, Associate Professor of Law,
Convenor, Women's Studies Research Centre**

Meet the WSRC Board

Puja Kapai, Convenor, Faculty of Law

Stacilee Ford, Department of History, School of Humanities and American Studies Programme, School of Modern Languages and Cultures

Gina Marchetti, Department of Comparative Literature, School of Humanities

Karen Joe Laidler, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences

Petula Sik-Ying Ho, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences

Jason Coe, Department of Comparative Literature, School of Humanities

Caroline Dingle, School of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science

Kelley Loper, Faculty of Law

Elizabeth LaCouture, Gender Studies Programme and Department of History, School of Humanities

We warmly welcome Dr Elizabeth LaCouture, also Director of the newly launched Gender Studies Programme, who joined our Board this month!

Addition to the WSRC team

We are delighted to announce that WSRC now has a full-time Research Associate. Urania Chiu joined the WSRC Board in July 2018 and is responsible for coordinating the Centre's administrative work and assisting the Convenor with its research and knowledge exchange and impact activities. She has been involved with numerous projects at the WSRC since, including the gender gap research project, #MeToo in Asia, unconscious bias research, and gender disparities in education. Urania joins us after graduating from HKU Faculty of Law's LLM in Human Rights with distinction!

HKU Gender Scholars Research Directory

WSRC has officially launched its Gender Scholars Research Directory! As the hub of gender and diversity research and the first and only interdisciplinary unit on gender bridging various faculties across HKU, we have put together a directory for all research and activities in this area and from across faculties so that students and researchers can review who is doing what in gender and diversity at HKU in recent years, all in one place. Check it out [here](#)!

Recent events

Future Value of Data

WSRC collaborated with Future Agenda and Facebook to host a one-day workshop on the Future Value of Data on 20th September 2018. It was an interactive dialogue involving both industry experts and academics from various disciplines including law, social sciences, the arts, and business, who exchanged views and ideas on data-related issues including diversity in data, biased algorithms, and different cultural conceptions of privacy.

Gender Studies programme launched

In August 2018, the Faculty of Arts launched the Gender Studies Programme. Gender Studies Courses are in high demand, and the programme is adding a new tenure-track line. The Gender Studies Programme offers a minor and major in Gender Studies and is the only Gender Studies major in Hong Kong. Students enrolled in the Gender Studies major/minor can take courses across the University, but the core academic programme is based in the arts and humanities, thus making the Programme unique among programmes in Asia that tend to be social-science oriented. The programme will be accepting applications for MPhil and PhD students next year. The Gender Studies Programme is grateful to WSRC and the generations of gender scholars at HKU who paved the way to make this programme possible.

Feminist Pedagogies

The Gender Studies Programme is working with WSRC and the CGED to develop feminist pedagogy expertise. In May, WSRC, along with the Common Core and the Faculty of Arts launched this initiative by dedicating the Spring Workshop to feminist pedagogies. Building on the success of this workshop, Dr Elizabeth LaCouture, Programme Director of Gender Studies has organised workshops for groups on and off campus. In November, she organised a series of panels on gender, and diversity in the sciences for secondary science educators participating in the Association of Science Educators conference at ISF Academy. WSRC Board members Dr Caroline Dingle and Dr Staci Ford and WSRC affiliates Dr Liz Jackson and Dr Jason Petrusis also presented. In December she organised a workshop supported by the Faculty of Arts on intersectionality and teaching in the arts and humanities.

Recent developments in gender equality policies

HKU Senior Common Room to become more family-friendly

A letter penned by Board member Dr Elizabeth LaCouture, and cosigned by WSRC Convenor Pujja Kapai and Gina Marchetti, Chair of the Committee on Gender Equality and Diversity in the Faculty of Arts (CGED) resulted in HKU's Senior Common Room (SCR) adopting an item at their Annual General Meeting to discuss rules surrounding the admission of children during particular hours on their premises. The policy, which previously limited children's admission to the SCR to after 5pm has now been changed to allowing children to enter all-day on weekdays.

WSRC Board members awarded research grants in the 2018/19 GRF Exercise

Congratulations to our WSRC Board members on receiving the following research grants for their gender/diversity-related projects in the latest General Research Fund exercise (2018/19):

- **Professor Gina Marchetti (Humanities), ‘Gendered Screens, Chinese Dreams: Women Filmmakers and the Rise of China in the Twenty-First Century’**
- **Dr Elizabeth LaCouture (Humanities), ‘Beauty, Cosmetics, and the Making of the Sinophone in the Twentieth-century’**

Publications by WSRC members and friends

Gina Marchetti, Citing China: Politics, Postmodernism, and World Cinema

Professor Gina Marchetti published the book, *Citing China: Politics, Postmodernism, and World Cinema* (University of Hawaii Press 2018) earlier this year, which looks at the depiction of China in contemporary film and examines cinematic influence as a dynamic and multidirectional process. It is a carefully researched and theoretically sophisticated book that makes important contributions to debates in transnational film studies, postmodern versus modernist aesthetics and politics, and Asian as well as European art cinema.

WSRC Board members present their work in Hong Kong and internationally

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

WSRC Convenor Puja Kapai and Board member Kelley Loper, working with other civil society groups and actors, appeared before the CERD Committee to present on Hong Kong’s performance of its obligations under the CERD Convention, focusing on the flawed legal framework in Hong Kong for the protection against racial discrimination and its impact on prospects for equal treatment and non-discrimination for Hong Kong’s ethnic minorities, including children, refugees, and ethnic minority women. Details about their joint submission to the CERD Committee and the press conference can be found on the CCPL website.

Puja Kapai on 'Everyday Racism'

Puja was invited to speak on RTHK Radio 3's *Backchat* on everyday racism, the obstacles in making complaints under the Race Discrimination Ordinance in Hong Kong, and why implementing a Chinese-as-Second-Language curriculum is important for children from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Puja Kapai on ‘Speaking Up for Women and Ethnic Minorities’

Puja received the Faculty of Law’s Knowledge Exchange (KE) Award last year for her project ‘Plugging the Justice Gap for Minorities under the Law: Applied Intersectionality Research and Substantive Equality’. Her work was featured in the April 2018 issue of the HKU Knowledge Exchange Newsletter:

‘People talk about gender-based discrimination or violence, or racial discrimination, but what my work highlights is that people are more than just a single identity holder. We inhabit multiple identities and when you locate and recognise the multifaceted identities all together in one person, that creates distinct vulnerability and disadvantage, which needs to be understood. We cannot develop effective laws or policies unless we can understand the populations we serve. I want to raise awareness about this across the societal, professional, governmental and non-governmental sectors.’

Puja Kapai at Sundance Friday: Women Power screening of *RBG*

Puja was invited by the US Consulate to speak as a panelist at the screening of *RBG*, a documentary film on the life and career of US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, organised by Sundance Institute on 19 October in Hong Kong. She was joined by Jessica Bartlett, Director of APAC Financial Crime Legal at Barclays. The session was opened by US Consul General Kurt Tong and moderated by Tara Joseph, President of AmCham HK.

Elizabeth LaCouture at the Hong Kong International Literary Festival

WSRC Board member Dr Elizabeth LaCouture moderated two panels at the Hong Kong International Literary Festival this year - #MeToo in the Literary World: Shaping Stories of a Generation and Fat is a Feminist Issue: Lunch with Susie Orbach, each panel discussing feminist issues highly relevant and significant to our times.

Petula Ho on 'Sex with Chinese Characteristics'

WSRC Board member Professor Petula Ho has been featured in the November issue of the HKU Bulletin for her research, 'Sex with Chinese Characteristics':

'Women’s work and the way they conduct their gender roles and present themselves as new sexual subjects are all important to China’s economic prosperity and political legitimacy. Most people think sex is a marginal topic, but it is an entry point to understanding the whole post-socialist China.'

Puja Kapai on 'Pathways to Gender Justice: A Critical Intersectional Framework'

Puja was invited to deliver a special keynote address by Plan International India and Government of India's Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment at the *Plan for Every Child 2018: Girls Get Equal* conference held in New Delhi from 5th to 7th December 2018. In her keynote address, 'Pathways to Gender Justice: A Critical Intersectional Framework', Puja discussed the importance of using an intersectional lens to examine the issues of children's rights and gender equality and to craft contextualised and complex solutions:

'When we can accurately problematize issues, we render visible the invisible – the unseen, hidden, yet embedded – realities. We are able to capture within our analytical lens the aggressions, power, oppression or structurally entrenched constructs and relationships between issues. This knowledge presenting a fuller picture with all its layers of complexity enhances the prospects of justice, in particular, gender justice.'

Kelley Loper on 'The Courts, Public Opinion, and the Constitutional Protection of Same-sex Couple Rights in Hong Kong'

WSRC Board member Kelley Loper spoke on the Panel, 'Equality in Relationship Rights: Lessons and Outlook from Recent Court Cases on LGBT+ Rights in Hong Kong' at the *International Conference on Gender, Sexuality and Justice: Resilience in Uncertain Times*, hosted by the Gender Research Centre and Gender Studies Programme of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her paper reflected on the relevance of public opinion when courts adjudicate human rights cases and the dangers of courts' potential misuse of public opinion data.

WSRC in the news

'How Hong Kong's top university is closing the gender gap at top levels: all-out support is key'

(*South China Morning Post*, 30 October 2018)

Convenor Puja Kapai and Board member Professor Gina Marchetti, in her capacity as Chair of the CGED, penned an Op-Ed on the policies and initiatives at HKU that are working to tackle gender disparities in the institution:

'While the number of women in leadership positions has been frustratingly static over the years, these recent initiatives hold some promise. Does this mean, however, that HKU's work is done? Quite the contrary. The momentum generated since HKU's signing onto the UN Women's HeForShe Initiative demonstrates that institutional change requires a clear vision, commitment and vigilance from the leadership to phase out gender disparities as relics of the past. These have no place in "Asia's Global University". To be effective, however, leaders require commitment and support from staff at all levels.'

‘Sexual assault acquittal undermines victims’ confidence’

(RTHK Radio 3 *Newswrap*, 16 November 2018)

A court found a former athletics coach not guilty of sexually assaulting a teenage girl a decade ago. Puja was interviewed on [RTHK Radio 3](#) about the verdict in the case:

‘I’m extremely disappointed that the seeds of doubt that [the magistrate] has relied on actually echoed the very concerns that many victims have about coming forward in the first place about whether they’d be believed and second-guessed in the choices that they make particularly in terms of how they respond to an attack while it’s ongoing and also after...it just echoed for many victims the kind of retraumatisation they fear and they do experience and are challenged by.’

‘I think what people fail to see is #MeToo is really a call to pay attention to the structural forces which undermine victim’s ability to speak about their truth...at every point of reporting – if you tell your families, or friends, or colleagues, even the police and now in the legal process, in the court of law, you are regularly confronting victim stereotypes, rape myths, and gendered ideas about how women should behave.’

‘[What we need is] education throughout, all the way and not just one-off, but persistent education and using these examples to really bring home the point that victims have a huge mountain of [a voluminous resistance] to overcome across the board. So depending on them or expecting them to take the plunge to initiate the complaint and to go through the process – it’s a lot to ask for where others in the community are not prepared to do their part.’

‘US Midterm Elections II: Women in Politics & #metoo, discussion with: Leta Hong Fincher & Puja Kapai on feminism in China & USA’

(RTHK *The Pulse*, 17 November 2018)

Puja was on [RTHK’s *The Pulse*](#) with Leta Hong Fincher talking about the #MeToo movement and feminism in China and the US:

‘I think [the #MeToo movement] runs right through from the personal to the political into the public space because ultimately it is about challenging structural inequalities and power hierarchies and imbalances that have persisted for generations. And I think the #MeToo movement is - #TimesUp or sort of calling out perpetrators – it’s really a signal that times are going to change and we just have to keep pushing the boundaries to bring more female voices out there.’

Things on the horizon

WSRC Gender Plus Caste Seminar - A Feminist Clothes Reading: Undressing Hindu and Christian Gender/Caste Relations in Kerala, India

WSRC will be hosting its first *Gender Plus* seminar this academic year on 14 January 2019! Dr Sonja Thomas, Assistant Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Colby College will provide a feminist 'clothes reading' of women's clothing practices in India, examining women's everyday lived realities of caste and religion. Read more and register [here](#)!

WSRC Gender Plus Education Seminar – Gender in Educational Research: A Historical Glimpse Through the Archives of Educational Philosophy and Theory

At our second *Gender Plus* seminar, Dr Liz Jackson, Associate Professor of Education at HKU and Director of the Comparative Education Research Centre will be speaking about her latest edited volume *From “Aggressive Masculinity” to “Rape Culture”: A Gender and Sexualities Readers* (Routledge 2018) and how gender and feminism have been taken up in philosophy of education. Convenor Puja Kapai will be chairing the session. Read more and register [here](#).

WSRC and Centre for Criminology to launch Asia's first MOOC on gender in Spring 2019: *Doing Gender and Why it Matters*

WSRC Board member and Director of the Centre for Criminology, Professor Karen Laidler is developing a MOOC (massive open online course) on gender to be launched the coming spring. The MOOC, *Doing Gender and Why it Matters*, provides learners with a critical perspective to observe, evaluate, and respond to gender issues, such as gender inequality and gender violence. Its content is contributed by gender experts from WSRC and CGED, including Puja Kapai, Professor Gina Marchetti, Dr Staci Ford, Dr Jason Coe, and Dr Aditi Jhaveri, among others. Look out for it on the MOOC's [Facebook page](#)!

Finally...

Thank you so much for your support for WSRC! For more information, please follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and visit our [website](#). We hope to see you at our upcoming events!