



Women's Studies Research Centre  
The University of Hong Kong



## **ENGENDERING A BUZZ**

**February 2019 Issue**

**Dear WSRC members and friends,**

Welcome to the second issue of the WSRC Occasional Newsletter, **ENGENDERING A BUZZ!**

In this issue, we are pleased to present you with highlights from our recent **Gender Plus Seminars** and we are delighted to launch the **WSRC Blog**, which we will regularly update with contributions that offer interdisciplinary perspectives on contemporary issues and challenges in the field of gender and diversity studies. Our very first blog entry is written by WSRC Board member, **Professor Gina Marchetti on the Women's Summit on Film in Hong Kong Higher Education.**

As always, 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 on how we could feature your work in this space. This applies to students and staff! Please drop us a line at [womensrc@hku.hk](mailto:womensrc@hku.hk).

**Kung Hei Fat Choy! We wish you a healthy and happy new year of the Pig!**

**Puja Kapai, Associate Professor of Law,  
Convenor, Women's Studies Research Centre**

### **Recent events**

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

WSRC's first Gender Plus Seminar this semester, *A Feminist Clothes Reading: Undressing Hindu and Christian Gender/Caste Relations in Kerala India*, held on 14 January, 2019 hosting Dr Sonja Thomas, Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies of Colby College was a resounding success and boasted a full house. Dr. Thomas spoke about her new book, *Privileged Minorities: Syrian Christianity, Gender, and Minority Rights in Postcolonial India* (University of Washington Press 2018), presenting the intricate interactions between gender, caste, and religion in the state of Kerala in India, mapping how the intersections of these identities privilege some minorities while oppressing others. She discussed the evolution of dress in Kerala, tracing its role in characterising the status of different groups of women and the dynamics between them. Dr Elizabeth LaCouture, WSRC Board member and Director of the Gender Studies Programme, introduced the

seminar and Dr Ting Guo, Research Assistant Professor at the Asia Global Institute at HKU and a scholar of religious studies, was a discussant.



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

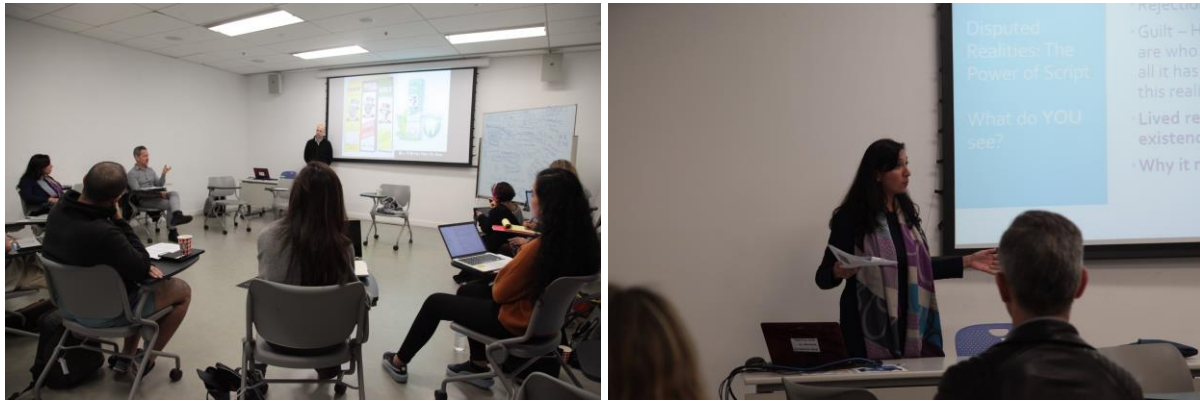
In our second Gender Plus Seminar on 15 January, 2019, Dr Liz Jackson, Associate Professor of Education and Director of the Comparative Education Research Centre at HKU, discussed her recent book, an edited volume entitled, *From ‘Aggressive Masculinity’ to ‘Rape Culture’* (Routledge 2018). She explored the evolution of education theorising and philosophy in terms of gender and sexualities through looking at a collection of texts selected from back issues of *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. WSRC Convenor Associate Professor of Law, Puja Kapai, chaired the session.



### **Gender Studies’ Race and Asia Workshop**

The Gender Studies Programme hosted the Race and Asia Workshop from 9 to 11 January 2019, boasting scholars from not only HKU but other Hong Kong and overseas universities including Dr Lawrence Chua (School of Architecture, Syracuse University), Dr Ting Guo (Asia Global Institute, HKU), WSRC Convenor Puja Kapai, WSRC Board member and Gender Studies Programme Director Dr Elizabeth LaCouture, Dr Jason Petruslis (Dept of History, HKU), and Dr Sonja Thomas (Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Colby College). The three-day workshop included seminars from experts in their respective fields and a research session, covering topics ranging from the aesthetics of racial representation, including blackface and whiteness in Asia, to institutional racism in Hong Kong and India. The workshop convenors concluded the Roundtable with a dedicated session to assess opportunities and

avenues for future collaborations and development of this network of scholars on race in Asia. For more information about the workshop, please visit the [Gender Studies Programme website](#).



(Photo courtesy of Gender Studies)

## **WSRC Research Initiatives**

### **WSRC Gender & Diversity Writing Workshop**

After a successful trial run in the summer of 2018, we have officially launched the WSRC Gender & Diversity Writing Workshop Series 2019. Held during the week of 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2019, we hosted a small group of scholars and undergraduate students working on gender and diversity studies from different Faculties including Arts, Education, Law, and Social Sciences to join us for a week-long writing workshop where they worked on their own research in a welcoming space stocked with coffee and snacks and, more importantly, where they shared best practices, challenges, and overcoming these in the work that they were doing. Participants tracked their progress throughout the workshop on a specially designed research ‘monopoly’ map, shared their goals, progress and key milestones achieved while exchanging constructive advice throughout the week.

We were so pleased at the end of the Writing Workshop, which devoted the last hour to a research progress report by all participants to share their achievements over the course of the week. They reported making much progress on writing up and editing their papers and feeling motivated in their research! But the work did not stop there – an ongoing virtual support chat group has since been set up and is a platform where participants continue to check in regularly reporting on their research and writing goals at the beginning of the week and their progress at the end. We are very proud to have developed a supportive network of gender and diversity scholars which we hope will continue to expand. We look forward to hosting more writing workshops in the coming months to enhance the research environment and productivity in the HKU gender and diversity sphere! Please see On the Horizon section below for details about our upcoming Writing Workshops.



Left to right: Sharon Yuen (student, BA & LLB), Puja Kapai (Convenor, WSRC, Faculty of Law), Lisa Yiu (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education), Jessica Valdez (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Arts), Sylvia Martin (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences).

### **Recent news and developments in gender and diversity**

#### **Gender Studies Programme Launches Research and Knowledge Exchange Areas**

The Gender Studies Programme in the Faculty of Arts has launched five areas of research and knowledge exchange that represent nodes of intellectual synergy around which students, faculty and the public can collaborate to produce new knowledge about gender and sexuality in Hong Kong, China, Asia, and the world. Areas include: Asian Feminisms, Race and Asia, Gender, Generation and Leadership, Gender Sexuality and Religion, and Gender Sexuality and the Arts. For more information, visit the [Gender Studies Programme website](http://genderst@hku.hk) or contact [genderst@hku.hk](mailto:genderst@hku.hk).

### **Publications by WSRC members and friends**

**Liz Jackson and Michael A Peters (eds), *Feminist Theory in Diverse Productive Practices: An Educational Philosophy and Theory Gender and Sexualities Reader Volume VI***

*Feminist Theory in Diverse Productive Practices* (Routledge 2019), volume VI of *An Educational Philosophy and Theory Gender and Sexualities Reader*, edited by Liz

Jackson, Associate Professor of Education and Director of the Comparative Education Research Centre at HKU, and Michael A Peters, Professor of Education at the University of Waikato and executive editor of the journal *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, was recently published. Following from the previous volume, *From 'Aggressive Masculinity' to 'Rape Culture'*, this volume continues to examine gender and feminist theory in *Educational Philosophy and Theory* exploring in particular, the difference that gender and sexual identities make to education theory and practice as well as that in other fields. The volume covers nearly 40 years of scholarship related to these issues.

### **On the Horizon**

#### **WSRC International Women's Day Research Workshop: Situating Gender & Diversity Studies Research in 2019**

For its signature International Women's Day event this year, WSRC is hosting a half-day research workshop, 'Situating Gender & Diversity Studies Research in 2019' on 1 March 2019 (Friday). The workshop aims to showcase the breadth and depth of interdisciplinary gender and diversity research activities at HKU and will feature scholars from across Faculties, including WSRC Convenor Pujja Kapai and Board members Prof Gina Marchetti, Dr Stacilee Ford, Dr Elizabeth LaCouture, and Dr Caroline Dingle. For more information, please visit our event page where you can also [register!](#)

#### **Gender Studies Programme & WSRC Fireside Chat on Faith and Feminism with Dr Donna Freitas**

The Gender Studies Programme, WSRC, CGED, Faith and Global Engagement at HKU, and the Faculty of Education are hosting a Fireside Chat on Faith and Feminism with Dr Donna Freitas on 13 March 2019 (Wednesday). For more information, please visit the [Gender Studies Programme website](#).

#### **WSRC Gender & Diversity Writing Workshops**

The next Gender & Diversity Writing Workshops will be hosted by WSRC in the weeks of 6<sup>th</sup> May and 13<sup>th</sup> May. If you would like to sign up and are HKU Faculty, please feel free to sign up by emailing Urania Chiu at [uchiu@hku.hk](mailto:uchiu@hku.hk). If you are an undergraduate student, you may apply to become a Writing Workshop Student Fellow, also by emailing the above address with a brief proposal (about 100 words) for your research.

#### **Other events by partners**

Many more exciting events are taking place at HKU this year. Don't forget to check out the [Gender Studies Programme website](#) and the [Committee on Gender Equality and Diversity in the Faculty of Arts website](#) to see what they have in store for the coming semester!



## WSRC Blog: 'Women's Summit on Film in Hong Kong Higher Education'

**By Prof Gina Marchetti (Department of Comparative Literature, School of Humanities)**

The Center for the Study of Globalization and Cultures (CSGC) [1] and the Department of Comparative Literature [2] convened a summit composed of women involved in teaching, research, and administration related to film production and cinema studies in Hong Kong higher education on November 23, 2018, at the University of Hong Kong. Because of HKU's commitment to action furthering gender equality through initiatives such as HeForShe, [3] the Women's Studies Research Centre (WSRC), [4] the Faculty of Arts Committee on Gender Equality and Diversity (CGED), [5] the CSGC contributed by opening a conversation about the current state of women in film production, research, and education in Hong Kong.



The Women's Summit on Film in Hong Kong Higher Education brought together higher education leaders engaged in film studies to understand knowledge production and engagement in a multifaceted context looking not only at program level markers but also community engagement within the broader context of higher education and external sites of knowledge acquisition and exchange in the form of film festivals and other important outcomes.

Our initial survey of participants uncovered strikingly similar words used to describe the challenges facing women working in Hong Kong film and in higher education. The marginalization of women emerged as the single biggest problem closely followed by lack of recognition and structural bias and inequality.

My biggest frustration as a woman working in film production/studies can be summed up in one word as ...



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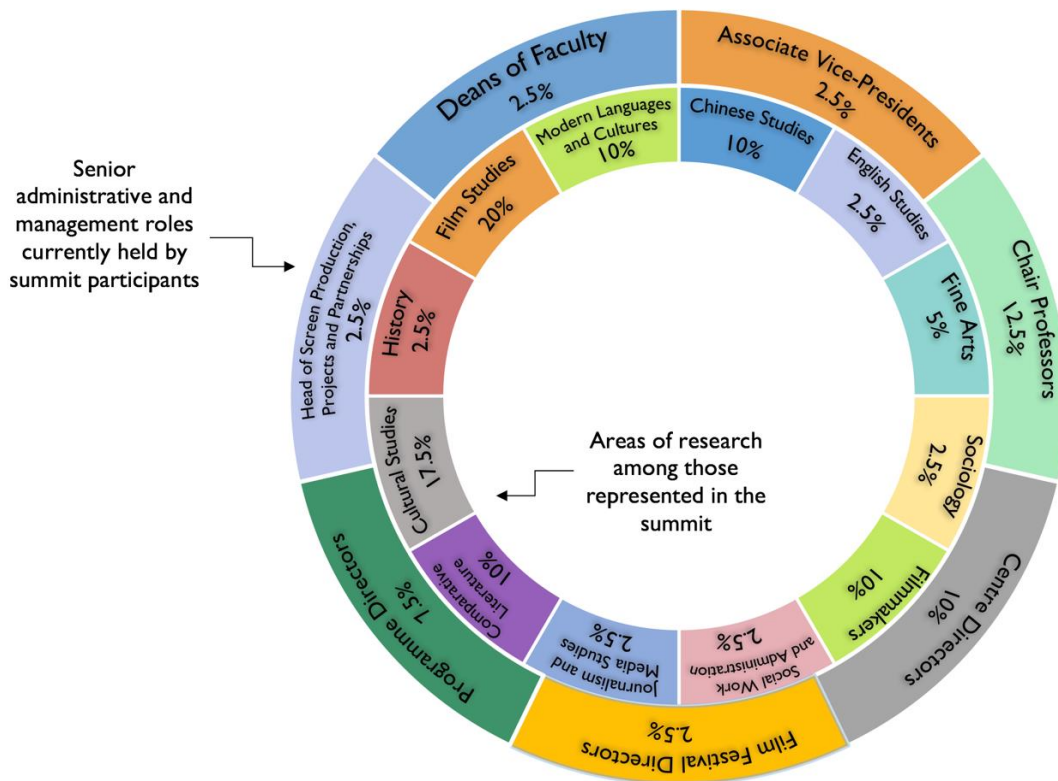
In my opinion, the biggest challenge women face in film in higher education in Hong Kong can be summed up in ONE word as ...



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Summit participants divided into three groups to examine research, academic advancement, and Hong Kong female film professionals. Each group took up the task to state the main challenges faced by women, provide evidence of the magnitude of the problem, consider the need for further data to illuminate the issue, brainstorm possible next steps and solutions, and, finally, propose immediate action for change. The importance of looking at Hong Kong in relation to global standards led to the discussion of the feasibility of employing a model similar to the Athena SWAN (Scientific Women’s Academic Network) charter locally. Started in the United Kingdom in 2005 to promote women in STEM, the charter expanded in 2015 to include non-STEM fields and institutions committed to gender equality across disciplines. With badges used to mark progressive change, the charter has demonstrated favorable results in several institutions in the UK.

### Women's Leadership and Research Expertise in Hong Kong Higher Education



(Graphic by Christine Vicera, Dept of Comparative Literature)

In addition to exploring the Athena SWAN model for Hong Kong, other steps emerged for further consideration, including networking suggestions for academics, filmmakers and other cinema professionals, the expansion of publication venues for scholarship on women filmmakers, digital circulation of information on women in film, sharing of library resources including film prints, and interventions such as unconscious bias training.

Professor Dina Iordanova concluded the summit with several practical suggestions on getting to know women's academic and filmmaking work better through expanded publication venues, digital distribution (e.g., VIMEO), encouraging more women to become film critics, mentoring junior women more effectively, and expanding boards to provide places for female participants. For Professor Iordanova, the dissemination of information through networking was key. She also underscored the need for women to take themselves seriously as public intellectuals with impact outside of the academy and beyond niche film circles.

The summit helped to identify the role, leadership and contribution of women experts in their field who are also leaders of their programmes and occupy positions of substantial influence in determining the future course of this work but also, importantly, the context in which it takes shape and carries on to engage the next generation of leaders in the field.

To that end, the conversation was comprehensive in understanding how the field can mark its contribution in rapidly evolving times which require a progressive approach to recognising and valuing the nexus between inclusion in fostering effective leadership and excellence.

Next steps:

1. The CSGC is in the process of constructing a directory of women in film in HK higher education with an additional section devoted to other film professionals, including critics, programmers, festival directors, publishers, among others. (Launch date: Early 2019)
2. Hong Kong Baptist University will host an event early in the spring semester 2019 to explore possible formal ties to the Athena SWAN initiative in Hong Kong.
3. An Alliance of Women in Film will convene its first meeting in the spring semester 2019.
4. The CSGC plans a second summit for May 2019 devoted to the role men play in advancing gender equality and diversity called the "HeForShe Summit on Women in Film in Hong Kong Higher Education."

[1] The Centre for the Study of Globalization and Cultures, <https://csgchku.wordpress.com/>

[2] Department of Comparative Literature, The University of Hong Kong, <https://www.complit.hku.hk/>

[3] HeForShe at HKU, [https://www.hku.hk/about/policies\\_reports/HeForSheatHKU/](https://www.hku.hk/about/policies_reports/HeForSheatHKU/)

[4] Women's Studies Research Centre, <https://www.wsrcweb.hku.hk/>

[5] Committee on Gender Equality and Diversity, <http://arts.hku.hk/about-us/CGED>

*Read the full blog post on the WSRC website [here](#).*