

# Wednesday Gender Seminar

Co-presented by Gender Studies Programme & Gender Research Centre, CUHK

## **Sex Work in the Time of AIDS in China: *Structure, Identity and Strategy***

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Dr. Susanne Y P Choi is Assistant Professor of Sociology at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her main research interests include gender-based violence, the social correlates of HIV risk behavior, health inequalities, and the health of migrants. Recent publications appear in *Social Science and Medicine*, *AIDS Care*, *International Migration Review*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Human Rights Quarterly*, and *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*

### **Abstract:**

Heterosexual transmission of HIV in China has caused great public health concern because of the rapid increase in sexually transmitted diseases (STD) since the early 1980s. Commercial sex workers (CSWs) in China are particularly at risk of being infected by STDs because the general level of consistent condom use with clients is low. Although epidemiological research, which focuses on the collection of quantifiable variables related to condom use, is crucial in assessing the future extent of the AIDS epidemic, they give little information on the social contexts and mechanisms generating unsafe sexual behavior. Moreover, its individualistic approach often neglects the structural and relational aspect of condom negotiation. At the structural level, sex workers are a heterogeneous population whose working conditions and patterns of engagement in the trade vary substantially. These create different constraints and facilitating factors shaping the outcomes of condom negotiation. At the relational level, condom negotiation is not an individual issue, but is about csws and their clients. The outcome of negotiation depends on the goal of the negotiating parties, the resources each brings to the bargaining table, and the strategies employed to achieve their goals. A fuller understanding of condom use therefore requires examining the complex and nuanced relationship between structure, identity and strategies. This study wishes to fill the gap by providing a nuanced account of how the interaction between structure (including the structure of work, the structure of engagement and the structure of interpersonal relationship at work), identity (a spoiled social identity resulted from participation in a stigmatized occupation) and strategies (survival strategies, health protection strategies, and condom negotiation strategies) shape condom use among csws.

**Date: 20 September 2006 (Wednesday)**

**Time: 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

**Venue: Room 122, Chen Kou Bun Building (enter through Sino Building)  
Chung Chi College, CUHK**

**\*Please feel free to bring your lunch box or sandwiches to eat during the seminars.**

**\*All interested are welcome!**

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