

# *Law & Society CRN6*

**Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society**

Dear Friends,

In an effort to maximize the utility of CRN6, we will now be compiling a monthly newsletter. The CRN6 Newsletter will go out on the 15th of each month. Please send information on publications of interest, job postings, call for proposals (in Word format), grants or awards of interest to section members to nels5271@gmail.com. Please include "CRN6" in the subject line of Newsletter requests. For books, please provide a link to your publisher's page rather than a summary.

## **February Newsletter Contents:**

- 1) CRN6's Submission for the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls to the Human Rights Council on prostitution and violence against women and girls
- 2) Online Conference Announcement - "Beyond the Interface: Critical Perspectives of Sex Work and Sextech"
- 3) New Publications of Interest: 2 Books, 4 Book Chapters, 4 Theses, 43 Articles, & 4 Book Reviews.

Sincerely,

Alex Nelson & Patricia Fernandez

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## **Submission for the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls to the Human Rights Council on prostitution and violence against women and girls**

To: Ms. Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences

From: Dr. Julie Ham, Brock University; Dr. Lynzi Armstrong, Victoria University of Wellington; Professor Barb Brents, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Cherisse Francis, University of Warwick; Professor Kate Hausbeck Korgan, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Dr. Alex J. Nelson, University of Indianapolis; and Dr. Menaka Raguparan, University of North Carolina Wilmington, on behalf of the Sex, Work, Law and Society Collaborative Research Network (CRN6), Law and Society Association

### ***Introduction***

We are submitting this as the Sex, Work, Law and Society Collaborative Research Network (CRN6) within the Law and Society Association.[1] CRN6 is an international network of 193 academics and researchers with expertise on sex work, law and regulation, human trafficking and anti-trafficking.

Our submission responds to questions 9 ('How effective have legislative frameworks and policies been in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in prostitution?') and 4 (What forms of violence are prostituted women and girls subjected to (physical, psychological, sexual, economic, administrative, or other?)) in the call for input.[2] Specifically, we focus on the harms resulting from the criminalization of clients, commonly referred to as 'end demand' approaches, the Nordic model or the Swedish model. Criminal penalties against the purchase of sexual services have produced numerous harms (including social and economic); however, this submission focuses on violence enabled by the criminalization of sex workers' clients.

[1] <https://www.lawandsociety.org/crno6/>; <https://www.sex-work-law-and-society.org/>

[2] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-input-report-special-rapporteur-violence-against-women-and-girls-human#:~:text=The%20Special%20Rapporteur%20is%20particularly,as%20well%20as%20of%20from%20survivors.>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-input-report-special-rapporteur-violence-against-women-and-girls-human#:~:text=The%20Special%20Rapporteur%20is%20particularly,as%20well%20as%20of%20from%20survivors.>

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Special Rapporteur Submission (Continued)

### *The criminalization of clients and harm against women in the sex industry*

In January, the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (2024) submitted a report to the Human Rights Council on ‘Eliminating discrimination against sex workers and securing their human rights’. In their report, they stated that the criminalization of clients “has problematic human rights implications and has been widely criticized by sex workers (UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (2024:5). UNAIDS (2021:3) similarly notes that the criminalization of clients “has also been repeatedly shown to negatively affect sex workers’ safety and health, including reducing condom access and use, and increasing the rates of violence”.

Sex workers have argued that the criminalization of clients reduces workers’ ability to refuse violent or abusive clients and risks income insecurity by reducing the number of clients and increasing competition among workers (e.g. Dodillet & Östergren, 2011; Levy, 2014; Amnesty International, 2016; NSWP, 2018; CGSHE, 2019; UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, 2024). Increased competition can encourage reduced rates, longer hours, and accepting riskier clients or business practices in order to earn income (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011; Levy, 2014; Amnesty International, 2016; NSWP, 2018; CGSHE, 2019; Vuolajärvi, 2019; UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, 2024).

Anti-prostitution ideologies that accompany policies criminalizing clients may produce abusive, disrespectful or unethical behaviour from clients. A 2012–2014 study of sex workers’ experiences across different legislative contexts in Melbourne, Australia (where sex work was then legalized) and Vancouver, Canada (where sex work is criminalized under federal law, and quasi-legalized under municipal bylaws) explored how women in the sex industry distinguished between good, respectful clients and abusive, disrespectful clients (Ham, 2020). Women argued that abusive clients were much more likely to hold anti-prostitution beliefs and believe that payment signified ownership, in contrast to respectful clients who accepted that payment referred to the delivery of sexual services (reflecting a sex worker rights framework) and followed workers’ instructions in bookings (Ham, 2020). Clients who reflected an anti-prostitution stance were perceived to present a much greater risk to sex workers, whereas clients who did not were more likely to interact with sex workers as workers, and to heed workers’ instructions and concerns. A survey of more than 2000 clients in the US and UK found that clients would report situations where they felt a provider was exploited if it were safe to do so (Sanders et al., 2020). In other words, clients can be engaged as monitors and assist law enforcement if they themselves were not criminalized.

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Special Rapporteur Submission (Continued)

### *Violence by law enforcement*

There is extensive evidence documenting abuse perpetrated by law enforcement against sex workers (e.g. Amnesty International, 2016; Benoit et al., 2016; NSWP, 2018; Platt et al., 2018; CGSHE, 2019; McBride et al., 2022; UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, 2024). The Nordic model has been erroneously framed as a ‘softer’ form of criminalization as it ostensibly does not punish sex workers directly. Although the Nordic model aims to decriminalize workers, ‘end demand’ approaches still justify and maintain law enforcement’s interference in sex work when clients are criminalized and drives sex work underground.

Legislation that criminalizes clients also masks the violence enacted against sex workers who are supposedly protected under ‘end demand’ approaches (Amnesty International, 2016; NSWP, 2018; CGSHE, 2019; Vuolajärvi, 2019). Sex workers are unlikely to report crimes against them and have reported an expansion of carceral interference into the sex industry that places workers at risk of criminalization for other crimes (Amnesty International, 2016; NSWP, 2018; CGSHE, 2019; Vuolajärvi, 2019; UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, 2024). In a review of the impact of the Swedish model in Sweden, Dodillet and Östergren (2011) reported sex workers feeling ‘hunted’ by law enforcement and targeted by intrusive surveillance.

Framing sex workers as victims (as opposed to workers) relies on a strict dichotomy between victim and offender. Protection is purportedly granted to victims in the criminal justice system, but sex workers who reject the victim label risk being treated as offenders. For example, Pye Jacobsson, a Swedish sex worker and activist, argued “you are a victim until you say that this is not a problem for me, and if you insist on working, and insist on continuing doing this, then you are ‘bad’ and will be punished” (HCLU-SWAN, 2009). The anti-prostitution framework requires women in the sex industry to acquiesce to victim status. This contributes to increases in stigmatization against workers and reduced trust in the legal system (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011). The criminalization of clients has not reduced the penalties and stigma against sex workers in other spheres and has resulted in sex workers penalized or discriminated against in evictions, immigration control, child custody cases, healthcare, taxes and financial institutions (Levy, 2014; Amnesty International, 2016; NSWP, 2018; CGSHE, 2019; Vuolajärvi, 2019; UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, 2024).

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Special Rapporteur Submission (Continued)

### *Conclusion*

Legislation that criminalizes clients, such as the Swedish model or the Nordic model, has been instituted despite extensive critiques by sex workers. Stakeholders who espouse the anti-prostitution framework purport concern about women's consent in prostitution, yet sex workers' rejection of 'end demand' approaches are persistently denied or ignored by anti-prostitution advocates. This call for input has been critiqued by sex workers rights movements globally who have challenged the violence of criminalization, the violence of law enforcement against sex workers, and the violence of erasure of sex workers' voices (e.g. NSWP, 2014, 2018). Advocates of the Swedish model claim to support women who are perceived to be victimized through prostitution, yet sex workers operating in Sweden shared that they "resent being treated as incapacitated persons whose actions are tolerated, but whose wishes and choices are not respected" (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011:23).

The framing of prostitution as a form of violence against women and support for the criminalization of clients is in opposition to various UN officials and bodies that have called for the decriminalization of sex work as a means of reducing violence against sex workers, including the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (2010, 2022), the UN Development Programme (2012), World Health Organization (2012), the Secretary-General (2016), the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (2020), UNAIDS (2021), UN Population Fund (UNFPA, 2023), and the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (2024). We call on the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, to recognize the role of the anti-prostitution framework in normalizing violence against sex workers, and to heed the aforementioned work within the UN to reduce violence against sex workers through the full decriminalization of sex work.

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# Law & Society CRN6

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Special Rapporteur Submission (Continued)

### References (continued)

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# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Special Rapporteur Submission (Continued)

### *References (continued)*

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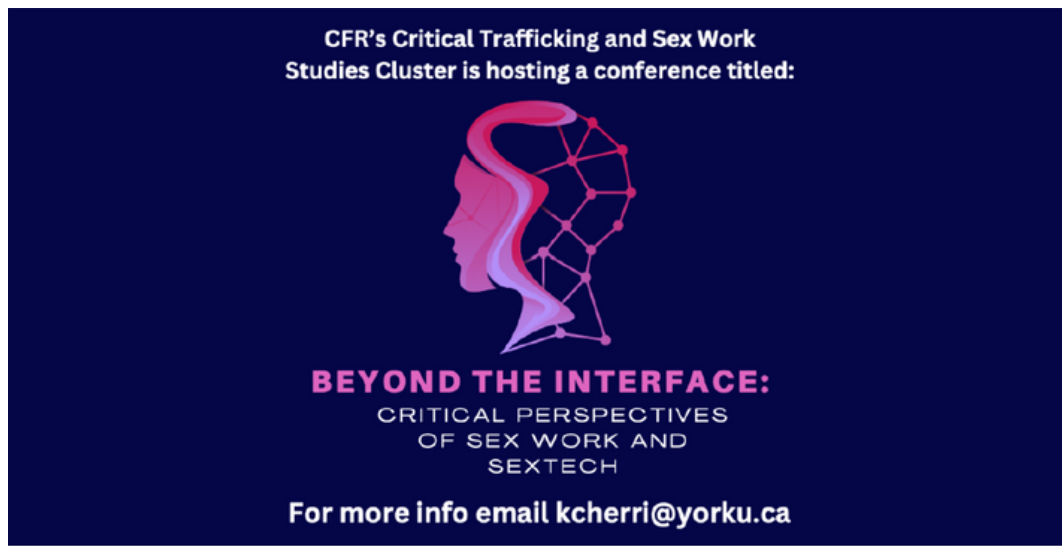
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Vuolajärvi, N. (2019). Governing in the name of caring—the Nordic Model of prostitution and its punitive consequences for migrants who sell sex. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 16, 151–165.

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## **Beyond the Interface: Critical Perspectives of Sex Work and Sextech Online Conference, October 2024 - Exact Dates TBD**



This conference theme critically explores the intersections of sex work and sextech, to provide platforms for in-depth discussions on the societal implications of artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and other digital realms within global sexual economies. The historical trajectory of the human sex trade reflects a dynamic interplay with technological advancements, with the interface between humans and technology, “represent[ing] both escape from the physical body and fulfilment of erotic desire” (Springer, 1991, p. 303). From the expansive world of OnlyFans (Cardoso et al., 2022; Mini & Baishya, 2023; Safaee, 2021) to cyberbrothels, the landscapes of sex work and sextech are continually transforming within the digital world (Gatson et al., 2022). Sex work has always been intertwined with technologies, from advertising with the printing press to modern-day communication methods using apps and the internet (Cole, 2022). Additionally, many sex workers are currently utilizing technology for a host of other reasons, such as to increase their occupational health and safety (Bernier et al., 2021; Jiao, 2021), to provide commercial sexual encounters using virtual reality (VR) with avatars (Lynch, 2010), or to escort clients to sex robot brothels for “digisexual” experiences (McArthur & Twist, 2017; Song, 2020). The historical discourses of sex work and sextech reveal a complex interplay between societal attitudes, legal frameworks, and technological advancements, shaping both



# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## **Beyond the Interface: Critical Perspectives of Sex Work and Sextech Online Conference, October 2024 - Exact Dates TBD (Continued)**

industries' evolution from clandestine transactions to the digital era's intersection of innovation, visibility, and ongoing debates on regulations and ethics.

Early stages of sextech discourse saw the proliferation of sex toys and love dolls (Döring & Pöschl, 2018; Ferguson, 2010; Ruberg, 2022), for enhancing personal pleasure. During the Victorian times, stereoscopes (Wood et al., 2017, p. 5440), daguerreotype cameras and “machines of the visible” (Comolli, 1980), were utilized to produce some of the first pornographic photos, films, and “dirty postcards” (Williams, p. 1999, p. 86-7), connecting sex work and technology in exciting and innovative ways. The advent of phone sex marked a significant leap (Flowers, 1998), allowing for remote connections and expanding the market beyond physical encounters. Webcam work where “entertainers perform for clients in highly stylized chat rooms” (Jones, 2016, p.228) took this a step further, bringing real-time interaction and personalization into the digital realm. In recent years, platforms like OnlyFans have empowered sex workers to directly connect with online audiences offering “both asynchronous content (e.g. photos, videos) and live content (e.g. webcam shows, chats)” (Stutz et al. 2023, p. 1). Virtual reality (VR) sessions have further blurred the lines between physical and digital intimacy (Evans, 2021), with immersive experiences transcending traditional boundaries, including possibilities for “virtual intercourse with real people” (VIRP), including with sex workers (Bredikhina, 2021; Vincent, 2018). Combining VR and teledildonics (Evans, 2023; Liberati, 2020), adds a sense of touch to the virtual experience between participants without being physically near each other while fostering digitally intimate and immersive encounters. Additionally, the emergence of sex robot brothels (Döring et al., 2020, p. 2; Hanson, 2023, p. 3-4; Su et al., p. 132), represents cutting-edge sex tech, introducing AI into the equation. These establishments explore the intersection of technology and physicality, challenging societal norms and sparking debates on ethics (Danaher & McArthur, 2018; Lin et al., 2012), consent (Frank & Nyholm, 2017), regulatory frameworks (Gordon & Pasvenskiene, 2021), data privacy (Conrad, 2023), ownership, security concerns (Stardust et.al., 2023), and the futures of human-AI and VR interactions (Dehnert, 2022; Levy, 2015).

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## **Beyond the Interface: Critical Perspectives of Sex Work and Sextech Online Conference, October 2024 - Exact Dates TBD (Continued)**

Throughout this evolution, sextech has not only shaped the tools and mediums of the sex trade but has also influenced societal perceptions, challenged stigmas, and prompted discussions on the intersections of technology and intimacy. As we navigate the intricate histories, it becomes clear that sextech is not just a facilitator of transactions but a catalyst for broader conversations about the intersections of technology, sexuality, commerce, and human-human and human-machine connections (Nixon & DüsterhÖft, 2017; Sanders et al., 2020; Saunders, 2020). In this conference, we hope to explore this dynamic field while discussing our dystopian fears and utopian desires within the ever-advancing fields of sexual technologies and sex work.

Conference themes:

The conference themes and panel ideas have been split into five categories which focus on sex tech in connection to sex work. These five streams are 1) Legal and Ethical Perspectives of Sex Tech and Sex Work; 2) Representation and Inclusivity in Erotic Virtual Spaces; 3) Neoliberal Globalization and Colonialism in Digital Realms; 4) Wellness and Safety in Online Environments; and 5) Technological Innovation and Social Change. Further details about potential topic ideas for each category will be provided in the call for papers (CFP) which will be sent out at a later date.

On behalf of the Critical Trafficking and Sex Work Studies Cluster,

Centre for Feminist Research, York University

Kathleen Cherrington

“Beyond the Interface” Conference Committee Member

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Publications of Interest

### Books

Camiscioli, E. (2024). *Selling French Sex: Prostitution, Trafficking, and Global Migrations*. Cambridge University Press. [LINK](#)

Fowler, K. (2023). *The Rise of Digital Sex Work*. New York, USA: New York University Press. [LINK](#)

### Book Chapters

Holmes, O., Aydin, E., Johnson, R. G., & Ozeren, E. (2024). LGBTQ+ Individuals and Precarious Work. In E. Meliou, J. Vassilopoulou, & M. F. Ozbilgin (Eds.), *Diversity and Precarious Work During Socio-Economic Upheaval: Exploring the Missing Link* (pp. 36–57). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [LINK](#)

Rizzini, S. L. (2024) Masculinity and Commercial Sex from the Perspective of Giuliana Musso's Sexmachine. In E. Mulley, K. (Ed.), *Dramaturgy of Sex on Stage in Contemporary Theatre* (1st ed.). Routledge. [LINK](#)

Bastien, S. (2024) Commodification of Women's Bodies. In E. Mulley, K. (Ed.), *Dramaturgy of Sex on Stage in Contemporary Theatre* (1st ed.). Routledge. [LINK](#)

Spowart, S. (2024). What Is Wrong with Us? *The Growing Issue of Child Sex Trafficking Worldwide*. IntechOpen eBooks. [LINK](#)

### Thesis/Dissertations

White, C. L. (2024) A Woman's Worth: Selling Sex And Virtue In Antebellum U.S. Melodrama. (Doctoral Dissertation) Florida State University. [LINK](#)

Salley, S. (2024) Perspectives of Human Service Providers for Sex Trafficked Women About Policy Changes in the Prosecution of Prostitution Women. (Doctoral Dissertation) Walden University. [LINK](#)

Ördek, K. (2024). "Doing Transgender": Sex Worker Trans Women's Navigation Of Femininities And Masculinities In Response To Cis-Gender Oppression. (Master Thesis). Middle East Technical University. [LINK](#)

Gireesh, S (2024) The Hotel-Love Segment: Safe Haven (Master's Thesis). Delft University of Technology. [LINK](#)

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Publications of Interest

### Articles (1 of 5)

Keighley, R., & Sanders, T. (2024). The eyes and ears of sexual exploitation online: Are sex buyers part of the prevention puzzle to reduce harms in the online sex industry? *The British Journal of Criminology*.

[LINK](#)

Benoit, C., Koenig, B., Mellor, A., et al. (2024). Navigating stigma in romantic relationships where one or both partners sell sexual services. *The Journal of Sex Research*. [LINK](#)

Crowhurst, I. (2024). Sex work and gendered tax imaginaries. *Modern Italy*, 1–15. [LINK](#)

Thusi, I. (2024). Organizing for the Decriminalization of Sex Work in South Africa. *Radical History Review*, 2024(148), 155–163. [LINK](#)

Rosati, F., Pistella, J., Coletta, V., et al. (2024). Racialized migrant transgender women engaged in sex work: Double binds and identifications with the community. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. [LINK](#)

Pratt, S., & Suntikul, W. (2024). The experiences of nomadic sex worker tourists. *Leisure Studies*. [LINK](#)

Are, C. (2024). Flagging as a silencing tool: Exploring the relationship between de-platforming of sex and online abuse on Instagram and TikTok. *New Media & Society*, o(o). [LINK](#)

Shimei, N. (2024). The moral behaviour of single young women immigrants to Mandatory Palestine: Between nationalism, gender, and professionalism in social work. *Journal of Social Work*. [LINK](#)

Davisson, A., & Alati, K. (2024). “Difficult to just exist”: Social media platform community guidelines and the free speech rights of sex workers. *Social Media + Society*, 10(1). [LINK](#)

Puffer, H., Hodson, G., & Prusaczyk, E. (2024). Attitudes toward cisgender women’s participation in sex work: Opportunity for agency or harmful exchange?. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. [LINK](#)

Simpson, J. (2024). The emergence and undermining of sex worker-led freelance feminism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, o(o). [LINK](#)

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Publications of Interest

### Articles (2 of 5)

Bonsale, G., & Suryawanshi, S. (2023). In pursuit of self identity in Mi Hijra Mi Laxmi by Laxminarayan Tripathi: The voice of marginalized. *Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences*, 28(1(i)), 39. ISSN: 0973-855X. [LINK](#)

Gregory, T. (2024). Reading Pornhub's authentication systems and deleted archive through Walter Benjamin's aura. *Porn Studies*. [LINK](#)

Tapia-Sequeiros, G., Zela-Coila, F., Quispe-Vicuña, C., et al. (2024). Sex work and health problems in the sexual and gender minority population: Analysis of a population survey in Peru. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, [LINK](#)

Igbinomwanhia, O., & Ugiagbe, I. (2024). Understanding the Dynamics and Complexities of Human and Sex Trafficking from South South Nigeria to Europe: A Critical Review of Victims Experiences through Returnees' Life Stories. *Transcultural Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* [LINK](#)

Mishra, P. P., Sravan, C., & Mishra, S. K. (2024). Extracting empowerment: A critical review on violence against women in mining and mineral extraction. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 109, 103414-103414. [LINK](#)

Messerschmidt, M. (2024). The Anti-Pornography Act and gender relations in Uganda: An analysis of how patriarchy and legislation interact. *Critical African Studies*. [LINK](#)

Fadhline, A. (2024). Waria, Worship, and Welfare: Exploring Trans Women's Conditions of Precarity Amidst COVID-19 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *TRaNS*, 1-17. [LINK](#)

Interiano-Shiverdecker, C. G., Romero, D. E., McVay, K. E., et al. (2024) "A Learning Curve": Counselors' Experiences Working With Sex Trafficking. *The Professional Counselor* 13(4):385-403 [LINK](#)

Dal'orto, C. C. (2024). Entre o antropológico e o porno-erótico: notas etnográficas de uma antropóloga-camgirl sobre trabalho sexual plataformizado. *Horizontes Antropológicos*, 30(68), e680406. [LINK](#)

Simmons, W. P. (2024). Rethinking dignity and exploitation in human trafficking and sex workers' rights cases. *Societies*, 14(2), 16. [LINK](#)

# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Publications of Interest

### Articles (3 of 5)

Hoang, T. G., Pham, M. K., Sterk, C. E., et al. (2024). Prevalence of violence victimisation and poly-victimisation among female sex workers in Haiphong, Viet Nam: A cross-sectional study. *Global Public Health*, 19(1), 2308709. [LINK](#)

Berg, H. (2024). “If you’re going to be beautiful, you better be dangerous.”: Sex Worker Community Defense. *Radical History Review*, 2024(148), 130–153. [LINK](#)

McCann, B. (2024). Special issue: French television then and now. *French Screen Studies*, 24(1), 1–16. [LINK](#)

Odinak, R. (2024). Prostitution adjacent: The politics and performance of mediated motherhood and sex work. *Feminist Media Studies*. [LINK](#)

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# *Law & Society CRN6*

Monthly Newsletter from CRN6 Sex, Work, Law and Society

## Publications of Interest

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## Publications of Interest

### Articles (5 of 5)

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### Book Reviews

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