

Project Title

Experiences of Male-to-female Transgender People in Workplace and Medical Settings (2015-17)

Funding source and amount: FGR I: \$50,000

Description:

Transgenders are those whose gender identity and expression do not match the sex assigned at birth. They disrupt the expectation that gender identity is derived from biology and engage in transgressive gender practices. At the same time, their ways of doing gender are regulated by the cultural norm that there are only two genders and everybody has to be one or the other. In Hong Kong, a derogatory term 'yan yiu', literally human monster, is used to humiliate and enforce self-policing of male-to-female transgenders. This study examines the ways that Hong Kong male-to-female transgenders do, undo and redo gender in daily interaction. Specifically, it focuses on the institutional factors through a comparison of their experiences in the workplace and medical settings. Transgender people who visit sex clinics are expected to present themselves and live their life in their desired gender. However, as protection against discrimination in the workplace is not made available in Hong Kong, transgender people are often under pressure to do gender according to the assigned sex. An examination of the interaction of these two different institutional practices offers a nuanced and complicated understanding of the contradictory demands faced by transgender people and their variegated ways of doing gender.