

Welcome from Feona Attwood, Róisín Ryan-Flood and Travis SK Kong

Sexualities

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Over the past 15 years, *Sexualities* has become the leading journal in the field of critical sexualities studies. This is in no small part due to the efforts of its founder, Ken Plummer, whose own scholarship in the field of sexualities studies remains hugely influential.

As the new editors – Feona Attwood (Middlesex University), Róisín Ryan-Flood (University of Essex) and Travis SK Kong (The University of Hong Kong) – we will continue to build on the strengths of the journal, as well as developing new areas for growth and expansion. We will retain *Sexualities*' distinctive identity as an inter-disciplinary and qualitative journal that presents cutting-edge research and debate on the material dimensions of sexualities and the social history and theoretical/critical analyses of these.

Looking back at the agenda that Ken originally set out for *Sexualities* in 1995, we believe that the list of topics identified then are still of central importance for critical sexualities studies today. We have retitled a few of these: 'Hi-tech and the new technologies of sexualities' becomes 'the new technologies of sexualities'; 'sexualized identities' becomes 'sexual identities and cultures'; 'cross-generational sexualities' becomes 'cross-generational sexualities, life course and ageing'; 'love and intimacy' becomes 'love, family and intimacy'; and 'gender blending' becomes 'trans* and sexuality'. The journal retains a central concern with questions of equality, human rights and citizenship.

The following topics are ones that we would like to expand.

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Media and digitalization

This area investigates the visual and media cultures of sexualities: mediated intimacy; the continuing use of new technologies for sex media and new technologies such as blogging and sexting; debates about ‘sexualization’/‘pornification’; the ‘mediatization’ of sexualities and associated notions of ‘mediascape’; ‘remediation’ and ‘media life’ and the implication of these for intimate life in the era of ‘connected privacy’, ‘networked publics’ and ‘public intimacy’.

Migration, diaspora and post-colonialism

This area examines sexualities on the move – across time and space – where we find sexscapes, sexual flows and sexual mobilities, especially in those countries that have a history of colonialization. We are interested in sexualities and exile, in the journeys of refugees, nomads and migrants, and in diaspora.

Affect and emotion

Our interest in this area draws on the ‘affective turn’ in the social sciences and the humanities and its concern with states of mind and bodily experiences and encounters; with intensities of feeling, drives, tactilities and desires, and with sensations and emotions such as fear, anger, hate, love, pride, shame and disgust. We are interested in what an investigation of affect and emotion might open up for critical sexualities studies.

Modernity, late-capitalism and neo-liberalism

We are interested in developing work on sexualities and the rise of neo-liberalism as a new form of global governance and a new awareness of what we might call ‘sexual cosmopolitanism’ – a kind of sophistication or superior (middle-class) lifestyle, usually associated with metropolitan city living, that creates a hierarchy of sexual identities and locales. We are also interested in developing more precise understandings of what characterizes sexualities in the period of late-capitalism and in the comparative study of sexualities in different historical periods.

Sexuality, as a distinctive area of specialization within sociology, emerged internationally in the 1960s. Its development in Asia (e.g. Hong Kong, Taiwan and China) came much later in the late 1980s. There are now more programmes, courses and centres studying and/or researching gender and sexuality.

It is true that as sexuality researchers we are no longer alone, but researching sexuality in academia is still a taboo in some countries and a stigmatized topic in most places. Our forthcoming special section, based around an article by Janice Irvine on the stigmatization of sex researchers, will take up this issue and we hope

to publish more work on the business and experience of researching sexualities around the world in the future.

We agree with Ken that *Sexualities* should act in a bolder, more dynamic way to help create critical debate. In order to stimulate debate we will in future be asking scholars to write short essays (500–1500 words) for *Sexualities* to comment on issues that are in the public eye. We are also interested in short and more substantial articles that revisit key developments in the history of critical sexualities studies or discuss new and cutting-edge departures in research. We would like to begin through a revisiting of two key texts: ‘Thinking Sex’ by Gayle Rubin (1984) and ‘Can’t even think straight: Queer theory and the missing sexual revolution in sociology’ by Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer (1994). We welcome suggestions for further topics.

We have all kinds of plans that we hope we can find time to carry out. As Ken notes, although the significance of grasping the importance of the global is now established, developing this in a substantial way is difficult and complicated. Despite this, we are committed to developing much more international engagement in the work published within the journal. We hope to promote *Sexualities* at international conferences and to organize an international conference in the future. We are particularly keen to seek more connections with scholars with expertise on sexualities and Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East.

We wish to thank all the members of the editorial board, past and present. We now have a new board with some new members whose expertise will help us with the development of *Sexualities*. The names of the editorial board can be found on the inside of the journal’s cover and on the *Sexualities* website.

In the following we introduce ourselves in a little more detail.

Feona Attwood

I was about to start my first full-time academic post in 1998 when *Sexualities* was launched. I had been a mature student on an MA in Women’s Studies in the mid-1990s when the study of gender and sexuality was really growing in the UK. My first teaching experiences were in Women’s Studies and on a ‘Histories and Theories of Sexuality’ option which was set up by Tessa Perkins and Jill McKenna at Sheffield Hallam University. My interest in representations of sex and sexuality grew out of these experiences and was informed by articles like ‘Only the literal: The contradictions of Anti-pornography Feminism’ by Lynne Segal which appeared in the first issue of *Sexualities*. Sexually explicit media have been a troubling presence in the academy; peculiarly difficult to teach, research, or even talk about for a variety of reasons.

Over the past fifteen years *Sexualities* has become the most important journal in the critical study of sexualities and it has played a central role in helping to establish sexualities as an area of study in its own right. It has been a major inspiration and resource for me; a really important part of my academic life, both as a reader and an author. My first article for *Sexualities* – on marketing sex to women – was published in 2005 and I co-edited a special issue, *Not Safe for Work? Teaching and Researching the Sexually Explicit* with I.Q. Hunter in 2009, with two other articles

published between those years. As a contributor I have found it to be the friendliest and most helpful journal I have worked with, due to the wonderfully kind and genial teamwork of Ken Plummer and Agnes Skamballis. In my experience it has provided a model of how an academic journal can and should operate.

My research is focused on sex as a set of practices in contemporary culture and it has touched upon several of the areas outlined for the journal at its launch. Much of it has focused on the representation of sex and debates about the new visibility – or in Linda Williams' term – 'onscenity' of sex in commerce, culture and everyday life. This is evident in the growing accessibility and diversity of pornography and its status as an object of fascination in public debate, as well as in the huge outpouring of writing about 'sexualization' of mainstream culture. Mediated forms of sex have become central to all kinds of contemporary debates about gender, consumer culture, technology, literacy, labour and citizenship. I have also become increasingly interested in understanding what Ken has identified as the new technologies of sexualities.

I now work at Middlesex University where I am Professor of Cultural Studies, Communication and Media. My recent work has been funded by an AHRC fellowship and examines official and popular discourses around sexualization in the UK, US and Australia. I am interested in how discourses of this kind become emblematic of historically specific preoccupations and how they impact on the way public, political and academic debate is shaped. At the same time I am involved in a project on porn audiences with Clarissa Smith and Martin Barker and working with Meg Barker on a project on how academics can engage more publicly around issues of sex and sexuality.

Editorial work has been really important to me. I have edited three book collections; *Mainstreaming Sex* (2009) and *porn.com:* (2010) and (with Vincent Campbell, I.Q. Hunter and Sharon Lockyer) *Controversial Images* (2012). I have also co-edited journal special issues on Controversial Images (with Sharon Lockyer, *Popular Communication*, 2009), Researching and Teaching Sexually Explicit Media (with I.Q. Hunter, *Sexualities*, 2009) and Investigating Young People's Sexual Cultures (with Clarissa Smith, *Sex Education*, 2011). Editorial work can sometimes be undervalued in the academy but I have found collaborative projects of this kind really useful for kickstarting and developing new areas of research, as well as building connections and networks between scholars. I feel extremely privileged to be part of the *Sexualities* editorial team. I am immensely grateful to Ken Plummer for his generosity in this handover period and I am already enjoying working with Agnes, Travis and Róisín.

Róisín Ryan-Flood

I began my PhD research in 1998, the same year *Sexualities* was launched. My dissertation was a comparative study of lesbian motherhood in two European countries, Sweden and Ireland. I was delighted when one of my first published articles appeared in the journal. Now that the journal and the wider field are so

much more well-established, it is useful to remember what a pioneer *Sexualities* has been. For me as a doctoral student, the journal was a beacon, a constant reminder that research on sexualities was meaningful to a wider community of scholars. This is of course true also of the work of its founder, Ken Plummer, who together with colleagues such as Mary McIntosh and Tony Coxon in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex helped to nurture a generation of research on sexuality and equality. It was a dream come true when I got a fellowship to work in the same Department and began as Book Reviews Editor for the journal. Agnes and Ken were an inspiring collaboration of efficiency and congeniality. Over time, the journal has gone from strength to strength, with the number of annual volumes increasing to reflect the vast number of articles submitted. At the point that Ken steps down as Editor-in-Chief, the role of Editor has grown enormously from its inception. Taking on a new role in the journal as co-editor with Feona and Travis has been the beginning of an enjoyable collaboration that continues in the friendly, lively spirit that Ken and Agnes shared in the daily workings of the journal all these years. We are fortunate that Agnes will stay on as she is an invaluable resource and an integral part of maintaining the journal's friendliness and efficiency, particularly as it continues to grow.

My own work continues to be centrally concerned with gender, sexuality and equality. Growing up in Ireland inspired much of my interest in these issues. After completing my PhD, which later became a book *Lesbian Motherhood: Gender, Sexuality and Citizenship* (Palgrave, 2009), I carried out research on the Irish LGBT diaspora in London. My interest in original empirical research in a variety of geographical contexts matches *Sexualities'* history of publishing work from diverse regions and we will continue to support this, with even more emphasis on global perspectives. 'Place' continues to matter, particularly in relation to growing diversity rather than uniformity around sexual rights on a global scale. As now Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Essex and Director of the Centre for Intimate and Sexual Citizenship (CISC) there, my commitment to work on intimacy, equality and diversity is reflected in the networks, collaborations, research and events supported by CISC. I continue to research and write about sexual equality, identities and politics, although my research also encompasses other fields such as diaspora, new reproductive technologies and questions of kinship. I also have a longstanding interest in feminist epistemology and methodology and my co-edited book (with Rosalind Gill), *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process* (Routledge, 2010), was partly inspired by questions of silences in research on contemporary sexual identities, communities and experiences. While Audre Lorde's classic statement that 'your silence will not protect you' was taken up by LGBT activists to support coming out, I found that silence can work in many ways in the research process, not least in informing ethical decisions and choices about how to represent minority groups. I have always enjoyed editorial work and producing edited books and journal special issues. I find edited work a great space for presenting an overview of a field and bringing together new debates and discussions.

One of the ways in which I think the journal remains so significant is for its distinctive focus on sexualities, rather than intimacies more broadly. As someone who works with both concepts, I have often wryly noted the more 'respectable' status afforded discussions of 'intimacy', in comparison to presenting theoretical work based on 'sexuality studies'. The journal has carved a space for theoretical and empirical work on sexualities that is unapologetic, cutting edge and intellectually important. It is to Ken's credit that he has left such an important legacy. Along with Feona and Travis, I hope to continue the work of the journal in this vein, as well as open it up to new topics and geographies. We are also committed to engaging the journal more in social media and enhancing its presence at conferences, something that the journal has always been open to but previously lacked the resources for. Having three co-editors helps to expand the journal's presence in new arenas as well as open up new ideas for collaboration and support as we take the journal forward.

Travis SK Kong

In 1996, I started my PhD in sociology at Essex under Ken Plummer's supervision. This was indeed a busy year for Ken as he launched *Sexualities* with much enthusiasm and commitment. In reflecting on that year, it was one of the most important for me as my foray into PhD research on Chinese gay male identities, intimacy, and sexuality entailed reading canonical works in lesbian and gay studies, and the emerging queer theory. *Sexualities* offered new groundbreaking ideas and was a critical resource for my specific investigation into researching Chinese gay men living in Hong Kong and the UK, and for exploring a new framework for understanding Chinese sexualities in the course of post-colonialism and the globalization of sexuality. Reading *Sexualities* simulated many thoughts that informed my research and has become part of my routine for inspiration, challenges, and debates. When, in the first line of the first issue, Ken introduced *Sexualities* as 'a new journal for a new time', he signified a new field of enquiry that would later come to be known as Critical Sexualities Studies. In the past fifteen years or so, I have been contributing to Critical Sexualities Studies through my own research, and feel honoured to be part of the *Sexualities* editorial team. It is our aim to publish excellent work and research in this field.

After I completed my PhD in the UK, I returned to Hong Kong. Sexuality, as a distinctive area of specialization within sociology, emerged internationally in the 1960s. Its development in Hong Kong and China came much later in the late 1980s. I began working in this area in the mid-1990s and have contributed to bringing this issue into international forums and debates. I am now an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong, teaching gender and sexuality as well as media and culture. My research falls into three main areas: (1) Chinese homosexuality and masculinity, focusing on the sociology of identity, body, intimacy, and politics; (2) prostitution in Hong Kong and China, dealing with the sociology of (sex) work, deviance, and migration; and (3) transnational

Chinese sexuality, along the lines of the sociology of globalization, the West/East binary, and inter/intra-Asian dynamics. To date, my articles have appeared in books, encyclopedias, and journals such as: *Sexualities*, *Body & Society*, *Gender, Work and Organization*, *Deviant Behavior*, *Critical Asian Studies*, *The Lancet*, and *AIDS Care*.

My work on homosexuality touches upon various issues, ranging from sexual identity formation and 'coming out' politics, inter-racial gay relationships, same-sex intimacy, cinematic queer representations, the stratified gay community and politics, the rural-urban divide in China, and social and cultural meanings of HIV/AIDS. My recent book, *Chinese Male Homosexualities* (Routledge, 2011), is a culmination of over ten years' study of the identities, intimacies, and sexualities of Chinese gay men, drawing on ninety life stories and extensive ethnographic works in three major locales - Hong Kong, London, and China (major sites: Guangdong, Shanghai, and Beijing). I have become increasingly interested in understanding what Ken calls 'generational sexualities' - how sexuality is understood and experienced by different generations. My new interest is in studying older gay men in Hong Kong and in China. Such a study offers a better understanding of the fascinating and complicated relationship between individual biography and social and political transformations. It also highlights the intersections of age, class, race, and other 'categories of difference' for understanding sexual identity under vigorous social and political changes, particularly under various forms of state governance in pre- and post-colonial Hong Kong, and in pre- and post-Mao era mainland China.

My second interest is in prostitution - female and male sex workers in Hong Kong and male sex workers ('money boys') in China. I have looked into the intersection between sexuality and the sociologies of work, deviance and sexual stigma, migration, HIV/AIDS, and state governance. Following on my previous work, I am now interested in the other side of the sex industry, that of the client. I am planning to write my second book, which will discuss the social processes entailed in erotic labour (class, poverty, and migration); the boundary between public and private lives (work/intimacy, client/lover); and the issue of social stigma, risk, and discrimination - all in relation to the changing political climate in Hong Kong and China.

These two research foci have shaped my theoretical focus on transnational Chinese sexuality, which in a sense rises to Ken's challenge for a rigorous analysis of the global. There are increasing intersections, exchanges, and flows of queer ideas, images, bodies, desires, capital, and commodities in Asia. This can be seen in the similar emerging patterns of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the sexual rights movement, sex commerce, 'circuit dance parties', drug use, and consumption lifestyles. I am not only interested in looking at the binary between the global and the local, but also at the differences within the local (inter/intra-Asia). I am keen to engage in dialogues with scholars interested in understanding the multiple trajectories of queer love, sex, and politics in Western/non-Western contexts, as well as in inter/intra Asia contexts.

In essence, my research trajectory critically engages contemporary social theory in understanding notions of identity, the body, and intimacy in modern Chinese communities in the context of global culture. I see my work as part of the newly emerging Asian queer studies, which is sensitive to internal power dynamics within Asia, as well as to the global hierarchies of Western modernity and knowledge. This Asian queer studies is part of the newly emerging Global South sexualities and also part of Critical Sexualities studies. My work has touched upon several topics that Ken suggested in 1995, which appear in the back of each issue. They are about sexualized identities, communities, and politics; about love, the body, and intimacy; about the stratification of sexualities; about 'space'; about health; and about sex work; using queer theory, gay and lesbian studies, and the globalization of sexuality as major theoretical lens. I find these topics still highly relevant + today and I continue to seek new issues for the future. My work echoes my vision of *Sexualities* – to seek out new agendas for understanding human sexuality, through investigating the intertwined relationships of individual biography, social institutions, and broader global/transnational processes. I believe, *Sexualities*, stemming from its roots in the social sciences, continues to devote itself to the investigation of human sexualities using multi-disciplinary, theory-driven, and research-based qualitative approaches within a global framework.