

Sexualities and Society

A Reader

Edited by

Jeffrey Weeks,

Janet Holland

and

Matthew Waites

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Sexualities and Society

The Contributors

M. Jacqui Alexander is Fuller-Maathai Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies in the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at Connecticut College, Connecticut, USA. Her research interests include transnational feminism, post-coloniality and the state, particularly in relation to the history and political economy of the Caribbean.

Dennis Altman is Professor of Politics in the School of Social Sciences at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. His current research interests centre on the relationships between globalization, sexuality and AIDS, and he is currently President of the AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific.

Henning Bech is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. His research interests are in urban life, gender, sexuality, media, history and social and cultural theory.

Chetan Bhatt is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, UK. His research interests are in the areas of ethnicity, nationalism, social theory and philosophy.

R. W. Connell is Professor of Education at the University of Sydney, Australia. His current research concerns intellectuals and globalization, gender equity, class in secondary education, and business masculinities.

Gillian A. Dunne is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of Plymouth, UK. Her research interests are in non-heterosexual experiences of gender, work and family life. Her recent work includes a study of gay fatherhood, and a study on young lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Harriet Evans is Reader in Asian Studies in the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Westminster, London, UK. Her current work is on the formation of gender subjectivities through mother-daughter relationships in rural and urban China, and on HIV/AIDS in China.

Anthony Giddens is Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science in London, UK. Among his recent books is *The Third Way* (Polity, 1998).

Janet Holland is Professor of Social Research and Director of the Social Sciences Research Centre in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science at South Bank University, London, UK. Her research interests include sexuality, young people, gender, education and feminist theory and methodology.

Stevi Jackson is Professor of Women's Studies and Director of the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of York, UK. Her research interests are in feminist theory, especially theories of gender and sexuality; the sociology of the body; and the sociology of childhood.

Lynn Jamieson is Co-Director of the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships and Reader in the Department of Sociology, University of Edinburgh, UK. Among her research interests are personal relationships and social change, intimacy, commitment, identity, sexual offences, childhood, youth and oral history.

Mark Johnson is Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Hull, UK. His research interests include gender and sexual diversity, the body, landscape and heritage.

Lois McNay is Reader in Politics and Fellow of Somerville College at the University of Oxford, UK. Her current work is on the idea of intersubjectivity in feminist and social theory.

Julia O'Connell Davidson is Professor of Sociology in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Nottingham, UK. Her current research interests are in prostitution, 'trafficking' and migration, and the commercial and sexual exploitation of children.

Rosalind Petchesky is Distinguished Professor in the Department of Political Science at Hunter College of the City University of New York, USA. Her current research and writing focuses on the disjunctions between global capitalism and health, human rights and gender equality.

Oliver Phillips is Senior Lecturer in the School of Law at the University of Westminster, London, UK. His current research focuses on the contingency of rights on status (defined in relation to sexuality, health and identity), and hence the tensions between intellectual property rights and the right of access to healthcare.

Ken Plummer is Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, UK. He has been editor of the journal *Sexualities* (published by Sage) since its launch in 1998.

Caroline Ramazanoglu was formerly Reader in Sociology at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, UK. Her research interests include gender, sexuality, ethnicity, feminist theory and methodology.

Lynne Segal is Professor of Psychology and Gender Studies at Birkbeck College, London University, UK. She has written widely on gender issues and feminist theory.

Tom Shakespeare is Senior Research Associate of the Department of Sociology at the University of Newcastle, UK. He has continuing research interests in disability and sexuality, and has also increasingly become involved in promoting research and debate on the social and ethical aspects of genetics.

Sue Sharpe is Research Fellow in the Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London, UK. Her main interests are young people and gender, family life and relationships, and social aspects of men's health.

William Simon (1930–2000) was one of the most influential sociologists of sexuality of the twentieth century. His work with John Gagnon at the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research in the late 1960s, culminating in the publication of their book *Sexual Conduct* (1973), made him one of the first social scientists to question the biologism and naturalism that pervaded much existing sex research. He was Professor of Sociology at the University of Houston, Texas, USA, until he died of cancer on 21 July 2000.

Arlene Stein is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA. Her current research interests are in the clash between fundamentalism and pluralism, particularly in relation to sexuality, in the American and international contexts.

Merl Storr is Senior Lecturer in Sociology in the School of Social Sciences at the University of East London, UK. Her current research project is an ethnographic study of Ann Summers parties – exploring a concrete example of the relationship between the sexual and the economic.

Rachel Thomson is Senior Research Fellow in the Social Sciences Research Centre in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, South Bank University, London, UK. Her current research interests are in young people, values and identities, gender and sexuality.

Randolph Trumbach is Professor of History at Baruch College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA. He is currently working on the

history of love in the modern world – love domesticated and libertine, heterosexual and homosexual, human and divine.

Matthew Waites is Lecturer in Sociology in the School of Social Science and Law at Sheffield Hallam University, UK. He has published book chapters and journal articles on historical and contemporary debates over age of consent legislation in the UK and on lesbian, gay and bisexual struggles in British politics. His current research is examining the Home Office Review of Sex Offences in the UK, focusing on the legal framework regulating young people's sexual behaviour.

Jeffrey Weeks is Professor of Sociology and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science at South Bank University, London, UK. He is the author of numerous articles and books on the history and social organization of sexuality and intimate relationships.

Preface and Acknowledgements

To understand society we need to understand sexuality. Growing recognition of this has led to the development of a new, rich literature on the relationship between sexualities and society.

In this volume we offer some of the best of recent scholarship on human sexualities, from a range of disciplines. Whatever their starting point, all the articles published here focus on the complex and rapidly changing implications of the dense interconnections between the social and the sexual. Contemporary sexualities, we argue, are made in and through societies. In order to understand the force of the erotic in the contemporary imagination, we need to explore the historical, political, economic and cultural factors that shape it. We believe that the selection of articles in this book will provide a valuable and thought-provoking overview of what has become one of the key debates in contemporary social science.

In editing this book we have incurred many debts. We would like to thank all our colleagues at South Bank University and beyond who have provided intellectual, moral or practical support.

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