**Sexualities and Gendered Intersectionalities**

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**Introduction**

As a journal, *Social and Cultural Geography* has played a key role from the outset in publishing geographical work on gender and sexualities, not least in bringing this work to the attention of those who may not have directly engaged with these topics through more specialist journals. Inevitably, the research interests of editors of journals influence submissions, sometimes through the direct commissioning or encouragement of submissions, but perhaps even more so through an indirect influence on the social construction of knowledge, not least the implicit subtext of the intellectual validation which new and emerging fields gain through the appointment of journal editors whose own work is in those fields. In this context, it is worth noting that many of the editors of *Social and Cultural Geography* over the last two decades, including ourselves, have written about gender or sexuality (e.g. Michael Brown, Mary Gilmartin, Elaine Ho, Phil Hubbard). In this virtual special issue, we have, of necessity, selected a handful of indicative papers on these themes, but signal a range of other stimulating papers throughout this editorial in the hope of prompting further (re)reading. We have chosen to read geographical work on sexuality and gender together. In doing so, we recognise that whilst cognate and frequently overlapping and intersecting, geographies of gender and sexualities are not by default synonymous, and there have been occasional tensions between the two fields.

In the first few years of the journal’s existence, it is probably fair to say it played a greater role in publishing important new work in the field of the geographies of sexualities than it did in relation to work on geographical aspects of gender and gendered relations. Although geographical work on sexualities had been published since the 1980s, and accelerated in the mid-1990s, in the early 2000s *Social and Cultural Geography* published a number of key texts which helped consolidate geographies of sexualities as an established subdiscipline. As the journal gained a reputation for work on gender and sexualities, it attracted and published work which helped take these sub-disciplines in new directions. This included dialogue with other emerging social and cultural research agenda such as geographies of the body, home, homelessness, violence, virtual spaces, alterity, carnival, consumption, mobilities, migration, emotion and affect, as well as the enfolding of gender and sexuality with other factors shaping intersectional identities, such as class, ethnicity, (dis)ability, education and employment. In these ways, the journal supported work which helped expand the scope of geographical work on gender and sexualities in productive ways. We outline some of these trajectories and themes below.

**Taking stock and broadening the remit of social and cultural geography**

A number of the papers we present in this special issue are from the early years of the journal and were publications which helped frame geographical debates about sexualities. Phil Hubbard’s (2002) paper, ‘Sexing the self: Geographies of engagement and encounter’ made a key theoretical contribution by attempting to combine post-structural and psychoanalytic approaches to sexual subjects and the construction of sexual identity. He argued that individuals negotiate their sexualities as they encounter both real and imagined worlds. Drawing on his research about sex work, Hubbard argued that sexual identities are fractured and always-becoming, shaped by the ways that representations and experiences are entwined in specific places. Julie Podmore (2006) challenged the assumption (found in much early geographical work on urban sexualities) that lesbian geographies were less visible than those of gay men because lesbian forms of territoriality were based around social networks and associational life rather than a spatially concentrated commercial bar scene (see Muller 2007). To offer an alternative interpretation, Podmore offered a longitudinal historical geography of lesbian bar cultures in Montreal since the 1950s. By considering the lesbian territorial visibility in relation to neighbourhood dynamics, changes in lesbian feminism, and changing relations between lesbians and gay men, Podmore provided a more nuanced framework for analysing the urban geographies of lesbian lives which has been highly influential. Another key paper from this period, which questioned emerging orthodoxies about LGBT space was Kath Browne’s (2007) paper ‘A party with politics?’ which interrogated queer critiques of the commercialization and apparent depoliticization of LGBTQ Pride events. Based on fieldwork conducted in Brighton and Dublin, Browne challenged thinking which polarized pleasure and politics, arguing that despite tensions between politics, partying and payment to access Pride festivals, hedonistic Pride spaces still played a political role in challenging heteronormativity in fun ways (also see Johnston 2007).

In addition to papers which extended and reshaped debates between geographers of sexualities, in the late 2000s, the journal also published influential work which connected geographical work on sexualities and gender with broader debates in social and cultural geography. For example Gavin Brown’s (2008) paper ‘Ceramics, clothing and other bodies: affective geographies of homoerotic cruising encounters’ returned to the theme of gay men’s cruising cultures and public homosex, which had been the focus of much geographical work on the spatialities of gay men’s lives in the 1990s and afterwards (Catungal and McCann 2010; Jeyasingham 2010; although, see Nash and Bain 2007 for a rare exploration of women’s public sex spaces), and rethought these encounters through an engagement with geographical work on affect and more-than-representational approaches to spatial practices. Similarly, Andrew Gorman-Murray’s (2009) paper on the migration experiences of lesbian and gay Australians made an important contribution to wider debates about migration. By interrogating the migration narratives of lesbians and gay men across their life course, Gorman-Murray scrutinized the emotionally embodied qualities of queer migration, examining how intimate attachments and desires shape mobilities. Also see Rani Kawale’s (2004) paper which examined how the performance of emotional work by lesbian and bisexual workers in London was impacted by the institutionalization of heterosexuality and its regulation of emotional behaviour in ways that perpetuate spatial inequalities between sexualized groups. Her paper importantly highlights the intersections of gender, sexuality and race at an emotional level.

Just as sexualities work published in the journal helped extend broader debates in social and cultural geography, we have included three key papers in this virtual special issue, which we believe helped expand the field of geographies of gender in productive ways within social and cultural geographies. Alan Radley and colleagues (2006) published a paper which examined the lives of three homeless women living in hostels and on the streets of London. In addition to examining how their homelessness affected the ways in which their gender was understood in public spaces, the work also made an important contribution by examining the role of romance in their lives, and how these emotional attachments relate to their strategies for surviving on the streets. In an engaging historical study, Sabin Bieri and Natalia Gerodetti’s (2007) paper considered the production of gender, sexuality and space in relation to women’s contested mobilities within and through railway stations in the early twentieth-century. They focused on stations as sites where different gendered and sexed bodies, social and spatial contexts intersected in early twentieth-century Switzerland. The urban rail station was understood as a site which presented particular threats to the ‘respectability’ of young women arriving in the city and therefore the stations, and the gendered bodies moving through them, became discursive moral spaces and sites of contested opportunity, vulnerability, regulation and intervention. For a contrast to Bieri and Gerodetti’s focus on how gender norms were produced spatially, see Chris Brickell’s (2015) analysis of archived diaries illustrating the time-spaces where sexual norms could be subverted. His paper is a cultural and historical exploration of an intense same-sex affair recorded in the wartime diaries and letters of a gay soldier serving in New Caledonia during World War II. These papers demonstrate the potential for intimate historical work in the field of geographies of gender, sexualities, emotional and affect, which merit fresh engagement. Finally, Greg Noble’s (2009) paper examined the politics of recognition from a different perspective – in this case in relation to young men’s subjectivities. It argued that gendered and ethnic identities are often given primacy in relation to debates about the politics of recognition in ways which can be simplified and overlook the complexities of young men’s identities and social being. Noble argues that young men’s identities are formed and performed in place-specific ways, because the logics of different social settings require different competencies to be performed in order for their identities to be legitimated within each context.

The development of more intersectional approaches to sexuality, gender and other social categories have also helped expand the fields of geographies of gender and sexualities in dialogue with other geographical sub-disciplines. For example, Andrew Tucker’s (2010) paper reflected critically on the politics of sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa (see also Oswin 2005), examining how the deployment of linked histories of racism and sexuality both enabled progressive constitutional change *and* were used to contest it. If Tucker’s paper represents a reengagement between geographies of sexualities and political geography, Vincent Del Casino’s (2012) paper offered a productive dialogue with health geographies. Acknowledging an increased attention to sexual health, sexual practices, and drug use within geography at the time, Del Casino argued that social geographers needed to do more to interrogate the intersections of power and human-non-human relations at the core of these practices. This is just one example of the ways in which work on sexualities published in the pages of *Social and Cultural Geography* has stimulated broader debates across sub-disciplinary boundaries.

Several of the papers included in this virtual special issue have expanded the field of geographies of sexualities – empirically, theoretically, and methodologically – in innovative ways. Understanding the spatialities of the commercial gay bar scene was central to much early geographical work on sexualities. Michael Brown and Larry Knopp’s (2016) paper took this work in an important new direction. They used archival data to analyse the role of the Washington State Liquor Control Board in enforcing the regulation of gay bars in Seattle between 1934 and 1971. Using a Foucauldian perspective on governmentality, they argued that the propensity of gay bar owners and patrons towards self-governance meant that gay bars sometimes fared better under this regulatory framework than some general neighbourhood bars – precisely because it played into the heteronormative anxieties of the State authorities who wished to ‘closet’ gay spaces from a wider public. Their attention to the prosaic activities of the local state adds important new perspectives to understanding the regulation of homosexuality in the USA in the mid-twentieth century. The regulation of sexuality and desire was central to Eleanor Wilkinson’s (2011) work on UK legislation which attempted to intervene in the private consumption of ‘extreme pornography’. This paper built upon earlier geographical theorizations of sexual citizenship and updated the concept to account for the changing regulation of sexuality online.

It is noteworthy, that, in addition to epistemological innovation, publications on gender and sexuality in *Social and Cultural Geography* represent a spectrum of research methods, albeit dominated by qualitative approaches, ranging from historical archive-based studies (Bieri and Gerodetti 2007; Brickell 2010, 2015) to in-depth interviews and ethnographic methods (Bagheri 2019). Paula Meth and Katie McClymont’s (2009) paper on South Africa also provides useful reflections on the value of using a (qualitative) mixed-methods approach for conducting research on men, masculinities and violence. Whilst the journal welcomes quantitative as well as qualitative work (see Wimark 2016), the latter is currently more typical (see another virtual special issue in this series, Larson et al 2019), reflecting both the nature of thematic and conceptual interests such as identity, lived experience and performance, attention to the interface between the social and cultural, as noted in the ‘narrative turn’ in migration studies (Gorman-Murray 2009; Lewis 2012).

Gender has long been recognised as a factor influencing migration patterns and experience, and is equally pertinent to understanding mobilities across all scales, including the embodied and emotional-affective experience of those mobilities and the relations, obligations, practices, performances and meaning-making they enfold. Gendered experience of everyday mobilities in Tehran’s subway is explored by Nazgol Bagheri (2019), in a nuanced account of negotiated liberties experienced on, and courtesy of, the subway which transects the socially-spatially segregated sectors of the city. Linking to themes identified by Bieri and Gerodetti (2007) and Noble (2009) as discussed above, Bagheri explores the role of public transport in the regulation of women’s bodies. The production of gendered norms is articulated through an examination of how women manipulate and subvert expectations of ‘proper’ Muslim womanhood as they travel across the city – adapting the visibility of make-up and how they wear their hijab contextually, depending on the situated social relations of particular districts. This experience of conditional and contingent agency via the subway has been facilitated by the intersection of the constraints-opportunities resulting from women’s increased public roles during and after the Iran-Iraq war, and the mandatory wearing of the hijab, as well as the benefits of recent improvements to public infrastructure, including women-only carriages and buses. This rich study signposts the complexities of situated and classed gender identities under Sharia law, and how these identities, their expression and power, can morph as social mobility is practiced and performed through the physical mobilities afforded by the liminal space of the subway.

Previous studies of movement within and from traditional patrilineal societies has highlighted gendered constraints e.g. see Hoang (2011) on women’s migration from North Vietnam which is constrained by familial and community discourses of their perceived sexual vulnerability. Similarly, Eileen Muller Myrdahl (2010) studied Norwegian family reunification law, which attempted to combat forced marriages, thereby institutionalising a cultural idealisation of romantic-love, and contributing to the remaking of Norwegian immigration law as a racialised project. In the process, it simultaneously made some Norwegian citizens invisible as national subjects on the basis of their relationship forms and made them hyper-visible as objects of paternalistic scrutiny. Gendered mobilities shaped by Muslim beliefs and practices are also the focus of Robina Mohammad’s (2015) paper on marriage-generated mobilities amongst the British South Asian community (see also Pande 2016). In contrast to traditional mobilities associated with marriage in Pakistani or Pakistani-heritage communities whereby women, nominally referred to as ‘guests’ or ‘outsiders’ within their natal home, typically move to their husband’s family home on marriage, this study highlights the mobilities of men from Pakistan moving to the UK for marriage, and their relative geographical-cultural and financial dependence on their wives as their immigration sponsors. In this way, these British Pakistani women, through transnational marriage, avoid the gendered spatial and social dislocations traditionally associated with marriage, and have the potential to reconfigure power relations within the marital relationship, underscoring the dialogic nature of identities and relationships (also see Noble 2009; Gorman-Murray 2009).

Thus, whilst women’s (sexual) vulnerability underpins many social discourses associated with managing gendered migration from within patrilineal contexts, mobilities and migration are also well established as vectors for emancipation. Qualitative migration studies which provide insight to the embodied and emotional dimensions of migration also include migration centred on individual’s sexuality. Andrew Gorman-Murray (2007; 2009) demonstrated the role of feelings of comfort and love influencing queer migration, including migration motivated by coming out, the gravitational pull of gay communities in particular cities or neighbourhoods, and the influence of a particular relationship (including a break up): ‘sensual corporeality, intimate relationality and other facets of emotional embodiment …. suffuse relocation processes’ (2009: 444). Su Xiaobo et al (2017) provide another different perspective in their study of women’s rural-urban domestic migration to Dongguan in China where they become sex workers. This study, which relied on ethnographic research in the elite hotel industry, reveals not only the mechanisms of the demand and supply of paid sex in a burgeoning industrial area, but also the dialectical sense of identity and home experienced by highly paid sex workers who gain financial autonomy and consumer power, but at the expense of social stigmatization and limited social relations outside of employment networks.

**Looking to the future**

We draw this commentary to a close by highlighting two (relatively) recent papers which have taken geographical work on sexualities and gender in exciting new directions, demonstrating that *Social and Cultural Geography* continues to publish cutting edge work in these fields. The first is Heidi Nast’s (2017) paper which brings gender, sexuality and the post-human into dialogue through its analysis of Japanese men’s adoption of ‘comfort’ and sex dolls. The use of these dolls is, in part, attributed to the country’s crisis in masculinity generated by multiple financial crises, and in part to the ease and control of such post-human encounters, with concomitant implications for more complex and necessarily negotiated human-human relations, and the wider context of the national decline in fertility rates in Japan. This paper is of particular significance in ways that it signposts relationships between material products, the emotional-affective constellations between humans and post-human phenomena, and large scale socio-cultural-biological trends it evidences, which represents an important emerging agenda for geographical scholars. Finally, we draw readers’ attention to work by Scott McKinnon, Andrew Gorman-Murray and Dale Dominey-Howes (2016) which examines the experience of lesbian and gay Australians affected by recent natural disasters. This work builds upon the well-established body of research on the construction of LGBT community infrastructures and queer uses of home (e.g. Gorman-Murray 2006, 2008) to consider what happens when these are lost or severely disrupted. They argue that these traumatic disruptions to home and community can result in the loss of sites that have key memories attached to them and which have underpinned the formation and maintenance of marginalised identities. More broadly, this paper examines how experiences of (historic and continuing) social marginalisation may be amplified by the loss of such key sites of memory during disasters. In a world shaped by the threat of multiple, intersecting crises, this paper demonstrates the need, and potential, for moving beyond studies limited to the everyday lives of marginalised (or precariously included) social groups to consider the impacts of major crises on their capacity to make life ‘liveable’ (Browne et al 2019).

**Conclusion**

These papers highlight the place and intersectional specificity of gendered and sexed experiences, constraints and strategies. Such fine-grained scholarship, which increasingly addresses the Global Majority beyond those living in the Global North (Bagheri 2017; Cook and Butz 2018; Hoang 2011), are central to ongoing high-quality work in social and cultural geographies within and beyond the pages of this journal. We encourage geographers to read and be inspired by the papers discussed here, and experiment with new methodologies and theoretical frameworks for studying gender and sexuality beyond binaries and the study of ‘normativity’. Contemporary social and cultural geography offers many potential ways for exploring ‘what else matters?’.

Finally, we are conscious that we finished writing this editorial in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. This has inevitably shaped some of our thinking about where geographical work on gender and sexualities might go next. Here, the experience of living through the pandemic, and the ways in which this crisis has impacted differentially on women and LGBT people suggest that there could (and should) be more work to come which builds on the insights of McKinnon et al (2016) about the specific ways in which ‘disasters’ impact on the individual and collective lives of LGBT people. It is clear that the lockdowns and quarantines imposed to slow the spread of the virus have forced many people to adjust to new intensities of domestic intimacy (but also loneliness), as well as focusing attention on the ways in which social reproduction and care are gendered and racialized (see Hall (2016) and Tarrant (2013). Similarly, both feminist geography and the geographies of sexualities tradition remind us that while we have been encouraged to stay at home for our own (and society’s collective) safety during the pandemic, homes are not always safe spaces for many people, especially those living with domestic violence (Cuomo 2017; Pain 2014). At the same time, for those with smartphones, tablets and computers, the experience of home during quarantine has been mediated by social media and teleconferencing platforms to an unprecedented degree and this opens up space for work which reimagines the spatial dynamics of family, friendship and intimacy beyond physical co-presence (Bowlby 2011). The social and cultural studies of life in the context of this pandemic will be many and varied; they need to include intersectional studies of the geographies of gender and sexualities, in the Global South as well as North.

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