

Introduction: Sexual and Gender Diversity Politics 50 Years after Stonewall

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The Oxford Handbook of Global LGBT and Sexual Diversity Politics

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Print Publication Date: May 2020 Subject: Political Science

Online Publication Date: Jan 2019

Introduction

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WITH the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall riots barely one month away in 2019, Taiwan became the twenty-seventh country—and the first in Asia—to extend marriage to same-gender couples. The new law arrived in the aftermath of significant youth movements against pro-Beijing governments in Taipei and Hong Kong—including the Sunflower Student Movement on Taiwan and the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong—and on the eve of massive pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong; it seemed to mark a more open democracy. National elections in 2016 had resulted in the ousting of the long dominant nationalist Kuomintang Party, representing the conservative establishment of the Republic of China close to Beijing. The New Power Party, founded by leaders of the Sunflower Movement, won key constituencies from the nationalists and joined in a parliamentary coalition with the Taiwanese-oriented Democratic Progressive Party, which secured the presidency from the Kuomintang. However, a 2017 ruling of the Supreme Court striking down the ban on same-sex marriage as a violation of basic rights brought a bitter reaction from opponents, including legal appeals, threats to impeach judges, and a national referendum resulting in a negative vote. Despite the opposition, the Democratic Progressive and New Power coalition brought the same-gender marriage law to a final vote.

Debates such as those in Taiwan over sexual and gender minority rights around the world provide the phenomenological focus of this handbook. This is not to say that we see teleological “gay progress” from criminalization to marriage. Quite the contrary: our motivation is a critical engagement with the global politics of sexual and gender diversity, asking as much “why marriage?” as interrogating “why homophobia?” The vote in Taiwan, then, demonstrates the complexity of global LGBTQI and sexual diversity politics, redolent of autocracy, democratic aspiration, moral panic, human rights, sovereignty and individuality, colonialism, and all the structures of power and domination that  inform

politics at the local and global levels. For example, we can consider the politics of marriage equality on Taiwan through regional context, as Diana Khor, Denise Tse-Shang Tang, and Saori Kamano do in their chapter, illustrating the locus of LGBT rights in the tension of relations between Taipei and Beijing, as well as in the governance of Hong Kong. Differently, we can examine the case of Taiwan within a paradigm that suggests a triangulation of the world around those countries that are homophilic and typically Anglo-European and those that are homophobic and typically non-Western, as Momin Rahman does in his chapter in Part III of this volume. As a new case beyond this binary, what does Taiwan say about such configurations? We might also seek to understand Taiwan within the global circuits of capital or the pull of liberal sovereignties and rights examined by Jacqueline Stevens and V Varun Chaudhry in their chapter, in the associations of autocracy and populism with homophobia as I explore in my chapter, or through the short- and long-term politics addressed in Julie Hollar's chapter on the global and local reach of debates over same-sex marriage.

More than that, even our reference to the fiftieth anniversary of Stonewall is far from unproblematic. Certainly, a global activist and advocacy movement circulates around and through the annual "pride" events, explored herein by Emil Edenborg, that mark their origins with the uprising at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village in June 1969. But, as scholars, we could as easily trace the foundations of modern sexual and gender diversity politics to the riots at the Compton Cafeteria in San Francisco or the demonstrations at the Black Cat in Los Angeles a few years before, the Lavender Scare in the 1950s, the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis in the United States or Arcadie in France, the Nazi students who looted the Institute of Sexology in Berlin at the start of their book-burning campaign in 1933 or the founding of the institute 100 years ago in 1919, the colonial laws against same-sex love implemented by the British throughout their empire in the nineteenth century, or the entire racial and gender construct of sexuality imposed by colonizers at the time.

So the phenomena we sought to consider in this handbook are more diverse and conjectural than they are certain and geo-temporally teleological. In Taiwan as well as France, marriage equality came with significant inequalities attached: prohibitions on medically assisted procreation and on surrogacy and, in the case of Taiwan, a ban on adoption and a differential age of consent. The collapse of democratization in a military coup in Egypt brought the end of a brief flirtation with openness among sexual and gender minorities there as the military and police instituted the most comprehensive crackdown on sexual and gender nonconformity in the world today. While the decriminalization of same-gender sexual expression continues to advance, sexual and gender minorities are subject to significant violence in countries with the most extensive legal protections; we can see this in the murders of transwomen in the United States and Brazil, two countries that only recently had taken a leading role in the globalization of LGBT (or sexual orientation and gender identity—SOGI) rights as human rights to be protected by the liberal international order. Finally, the rise of nationalism and populism has destabilized the once dominant liberal order and suggests, instead, a variety of competing national and regional forces—some homophilic and supportive of sexual (p. 3) orientation and gender identity rights,

some homophobically hostile to LGBT rights—but not as a bifurcated world. Indeed, the evidence suggests more a series of powers each presenting a unique view of global “governance” through which homophilia or homophobia takes form.

Understanding Sexual Diversity as Global and Local

The handbook interrogates a range of phenomena evidenced within the field of LGBT and sexual diversity politics today. While scholars and advocates have devoted significant attention to the relatively rapid spread of LGBT rights politics and policies across the West and then globally, along with their contextual variations, since 2009 a significant body of work has turned to LGBT and sexual diversity politics as a site of struggle (Altman and Symons 2016), through a new focus on political homophobia (Murray 2009; Weiss and Bosia 2013), or, originating in the groundbreaking work of Gayle Rubin (1984 and drawing from the legacy of Stuart Hall et al. ([1978] 2013), within an analysis of sexual moral panics (Herdt 2009). Others have examined the relationship between normative and non-normative sexualities as constructed through the role of the state (Canaday 2009; Amar 2013) and the relationship between empire and sexuality politics during the war on terror (Massad 2007; Puar 2007).

These studies draw on the diversity of phenomena that can be grouped within the field of global LGBT and sexual diversity politics. Along with the rapid expansion of marriage rights over a 20-year period, there has emerged a more recent and rapid expansion of restrictive laws that might not penalize sexual conduct but do criminalize advocacy. At the same time, rhetoric and policing have been used by autocratic regimes to craft moral panic around sexuality and to solidify political authority. So while we might see the availability of marriage in Ireland, Argentina, the United States, and South Africa—and the move to decriminalize sexuality in Tunisia and elsewhere—as signs of “progress,” we also see in the same time frame the criminalization of advocacy or organizing around sexuality in Uganda and Russia, the draconian policing of sexual minorities in Egypt and torture in Chechnya, and explicit moves to marginalize gender minorities in the United States. Around the globe, sexual and gender minorities have joined other groups internally displaced or forced into migration by war, natural disaster, economic and social violence, and repression. Only a handful of states include protections for sexual and gender minority migrants, but they are only now beginning to address the structural heterosexism and homophobias expressed in asylum laws (Dawson and Gerber 2017).

In our view, the current globalization of sexual diversity politics must be understood both in historical and cultural terms and in terms of why in the contemporary world sexuality continues to provoke social conflict. Claims to rights emerged in a context of (p. 4) visible and public restrictions on same-gender sexuality and gender non-conformity and later encountered the reinvigoration of these processes, often in the resistance of some states to decriminalizing same-sex acts (Hildebrandt 2014) and the emergence of political homophobia as a transnational phenomenon that allies governing elites with nationalist and/or religious social movements (Weiss and Bosia 2013). Both historically and in contemporary times, politically oriented populist, nationalist, and religious groups have been active in

campaigning against LGBT rights, both from within the dominant established religion, as in the case of Christians in the United States (Rayside and Wilcox 2011), Latin America, and Uganda, and from faith-based networks associated with immigrant ethnic groups such as Muslims in the West (Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010), as conservatives in Ontario have tried to exploit. The other major function of this handbook is to provide a more complex analytical understanding of the emergence, social significance, and contemporary directions of LGBT politics, thus complicating a simplistic “progress” narrative by giving our readers the theories, concepts, and evidence necessary to assess the contemporary successes and failures of global sexual and gender diversity political strategies and goals.

With the emergence of queer studies, sexuality studies, and LGBT political studies, we see opportunity for a new publication and the limits of current work. Various single-issue studies have focused on the dynamics of LGBT rights activism, heteronormativity, or the politics of sexuality in the United States specifically or the West more broadly (Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel 1999), turning beyond the west in the twenty-first century (Altman and Symons 2016). More recent admirable efforts still devote significant attention to the United States before the globalization of a local LGBT form, giving greater weight to an argument of single origins (Brettschneider, Burgess, and Keating 2017). Historical studies by Blackwood and Wieringa (1999), Boellstorff (2005), Epprecht (2005), Hoad (2000), the collections edited by Epprecht and Nyeck (2013) and Weiss and Bosia (2013), and works by Puar (2007), Rahman (2014), and Rao (2010) have begun to trace complex local narratives outside the West and provide a critical understanding of global LGBT politics as they intersect with empire and race. Scholars such as Broqua (2014), Bueno-Hansen (2017), and Currier (2019) are working on contemporary phenomena outside the United States and other advanced democracies in detailed and necessary case studies. And while Kollman and Waites (2009), Zivi (2011), Wilkinson and Langlois (2014), and Thoreson (2017) offer substantive critique of the global LGBT rights agenda, Weber (2014) and Picq and Thiel (2015) offer a profound interrogation of international relations scholarship through a queer lens.

The handbook is distinct in being interdisciplinary and combining empirical evidence with broader theoretical perspectives, with ample space to provide a truly global range, focusing on theoretical synthesis to illustrate the importance of sexual and gender identity politics, their relevance to global governance, how they achieve and exert such decisive power, and how they shape the collective identities and strategies of those groups they target. We have sought to create a collection that is accessible to scholars, students, and activists and especially germane to the increasing array of departments (p. 5) and programs embracing LGBT and sexuality studies, as well as social movements and human rights advocates. Moreover, our emphasis on state practice, transnational networks, and historical context opens new avenues for debate, dialogue, and theory-building within multiple disciplines including political science, international relations, political psychology, history, gender studies, and sociology.

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As editors, we came to this project very much with complexities in mind, having conducted research on violence in Northern Ireland; homophobia in France, Egypt, and Uganda; and the tensions over sexual minority lived experience between the West and the Muslim world. At the same time, we began this project as firm critics of the liberal international order and how rights originating in the West such as marriage equality have come to mark progress (see Rahman, Langlois, and Bosia this volume), in the same way that other scholars and significant numbers of sexual and gender minorities have been hostile or indifferent to marriage as an institution, unable to conceive of it for themselves, or unwilling to ask for it. If LGBT rights are human rights, we have argued, the roles of the state and Western modernity, as well as violence, are present in the articulation of rights and in their imposition over and against those who are excluded from their protections. While we initiated this work in the first years after Hillary Clinton associated US international policy with LGBT rights, we brought it to a conclusion under the following administration that replaced internationalism with xenophobic Americanism and isolation as it withdrew important protections for gender minorities domestically and internationally while stacking the judiciary, administration, and foreign policy establishment with anti-LGBT homophobes.



Figure 0.1 Zanele Muholi, Mellissa Mbambo, Durban South Beach

© 2017 Zanele Muholi. Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town & Johannesburg; and Yancey Richardson, New York.

Even selecting a cover design in this context is riddled with complexities. How does an image capture the global struggle over sexuality and gender, the powerful neocolonial

structures, the impulses of racial configuration embedded in Euro-American superiority and imperial projects, the imposition of Western sexual and gender binaries through the export of heterosexist rhetorics and practices? And at the same time we struggle to address global currents, we are dedicated to representing the lived experiences in the global, in the struggle, achievement, happiness, and loss of sexual and gender minorities in the more or less clandestine and more or less resourced networks they construct. We identified an image from the South African queer artist Zanele Muholi, who a few years ago had visited Saint Michael's College in the United States where I teach, at the invitation of Director Micalee Sullivan of the Center for Women and Gender. Their photographs tell the stories of queers of color, primarily living in townships, who survive between a legal environment of inclusion and a political and social—and often violent—homophobia within a system of persistent structural racism. In the full image (Figure 0.1), which had to be edited to meet the graphic requirements of the cover, we see Mellissa Mbambo, second runner up for the Miss Gay RSA (Republic of South Africa) title, on the beach in Durban under a rainbow umbrella, where a group of boys pass her by, seemingly indifferent to her presence and her experience. Her stance and theirs is reflected in the water on whose edge she stands, and this reflection dominates the image. For us, Zanele captures the complexities and racializations of gender (p. 6) and sexual minority lives in much of the world today, where visibility is juxtaposed against patterns of both indifference and hostility and where the refractions of identity as represented and reproduced often overwhelm the reality of lived experiences, hopes, and desires. While Mbambo offers an expression of pride, the shimmering nature of the reflection suggests the tentativeness of such sentiments and the identities and politics tied to them. Furthermore, the image is one of beauty; however complexly layered that beauty is read, it is still an assertion of racialized and queer beauty.

(p. 7) Diversity and Inclusion

This volume also targets the challenge posed to us by BIPOC scholars, scholars from the Global South, feminists and scholars outside the gender binary: to be inclusive in terms of our approach to sexual and gender minority politics and to provide opportunities for scholars to speak for themselves and for the communities where they conduct research and which they serve. This reflexive approach was our commitment to embrace diversity as a necessity in scholarly research, as each of us brings a perspective and experience to the questions we ask and the ways that we ask them but also as a strategic imperative because the discipline in which we work must do better to reflect the world in which we live.

In doing so, as editors, sometimes we have exceeded and sometimes fallen short of our goals. This reflects the professional ability of all scholars, including those in the Global South, to work on sexuality issues at a time of populist and autocratic retrenchments, the importance of networks to publishing opportunities, the tensions between academic analyses and activism in contemporary global LGBT politics, the need to balance the demands of providing a survey of established literature with emerging perspectives, the ability to provide a decolonized set of knowledges in the context of a Western “canon,”

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the ability to connect regional or national examples to broader international relations, and the ability to ask whether terminology derived from Western academies and societies have relevance for global studies of sexuality. Our effort was animated by the recognition that sexuality studies remains a marginal aspect of international relations in the Global North academies, which both positively and negatively impacts the ability to make Global South perspectives central to a queer global academic body of work.

At publication, we have made significant progress, though more remains to be done in our disciplines. This volume includes some of the best-regarded senior scholars in the field, such as Barry Adam, David Rayside, Jacqueline Stevens, Miriam Smith, and Dennis Altman. It also provides opportunities for emerging scholars, including Justin Perez, Elijah Adiv Edelman, V Varun Chaudhry, Cornel Grey, Nikoli A. Attai, Emil Edenborg, and Julie Hollar. And we have scholars working on every continent (except Antarctica), from Manuela L. Picq in Latin America to David Paternotte and Matthew Waites in Europe to Pawan Singh, Anthony J. Langlois, and Cai Wilkinson in Australia to Denise Tse-Shang Tang in Hong Kong and Diana Khor and Saori Kamano in Japan to Monica Tabengwa from Botswana to Javier Corrales in Massachusetts.

The Personal Is Political

During the production of this volume, the editors and contributors also have experienced our own personal journeys. We have changed jobs, overcome illness, provided (p. 8) care to loved ones, mourned the loss of those most dear to us, and suffered violence, intimidation, imprisonment, and threats of imprisonment. Contributors have had to step aside because the world itself does not provide any of us with a nice, teleological narrative. These realities are important to recognize for several reasons. First, the lived experiences that inform our work include our challenges and loss as our bodies and our intimacies are a political terrain through which we struggle. Second, queer people are less likely to have access to much needed familial support when in need; thus, we turn to each other—contrarily, queer siblings, children, aunts, and uncles might be the only ones in the family with the resources and flexibility to provide support for others and so are called on to do more. When subject to intimidation or constraint, our own shame might keep us from fighting back, or the failures of those who attempted to do so before us serve as a model of discouragement.

Nevertheless, we have found that in working together through our personal journeys, with a shared commitment to understanding and a passion for social justice, we can give each of us the strength to move forward or to understand with compassion when we must step aside.

Structure of the Volume

Scholars, advocates, policymakers, students, and teachers will find the handbook to be a sophisticated tool to introduce and explore the variety of phenomena, theoretical implications, and life consequences linked to global LGBT and sexual diversity politics. Indeed, with twenty-eight chapters divided into three sections, the handbook provides a unique

opportunity for a broader conceptualization and theoretical development than in standard-format edited volumes. The first section provides the historical framework, outlines the theoretical questions, and brings us into the twenty-first century to engage global processes locally or transnationally conceived. The second highlights critical case studies arranged in geotemporal terms and through an assessment of specific policy initiatives both globally constituted and nationally relevant. Finally, in the third section we critique and extend our understanding of LGBT and sexual diversity politics, question the outcomes of change in terms of unforeseen consequences or implications, and provide new theoretical tools for scholarly development and practical reflexive critiques and strategies for real-world intervention.

We begin the handbook by placing the study of LGBT and sexual diversity politics within a web of theoretical and empirical threads. In this section, Momin Rahman introduces the social construction of sexual and gender identity for readers new to the field while expanding conceptually to explore sexuality along a hierarchy that enforces forms of heteronormative and heterosexist oppressions. In this way, he attends to the powerful critique of LGBT politics and much analysis that sees in certain phenomena a proof of social progress, instead suggesting that outcomes are situational, contextual, and contested as constructed. Barry Adam returns to the groundbreaking work of (p. 9) D'Emilio to explore the connection between sociological and economic structures and the possibilities for specific forms of sexual expression found in different periods of development. David Ray-side and Anthony J. Langlois each explore LGBT organizing, from early efforts for the former to the emergence of a global LGBT rights framework for the latter; and Elija Adiv Edelman examines gender identity through its global social and political aspects. Subsequent chapters in this section suggest the problematic nature of contemporary sexual diversity politics, by recontextualizing global processes as local (Perez) and examining the policy and theoretical consequences in the practice (Aylward) and study (Thiel) of international politics.

Admittedly, the second section presented a particular challenge for the editors. How do we capture and contextualize local and global phenomena in a way that does not reify notions of progress, culture, colonial conceptualizations of geography, or practices of contemporary empire? Are there ways to provide regionally specific studies along with topical case chapters that seek to explore a variety of modes of politics? One method, from MacIntyre, is to consider “cases where the will to achieve the same end was pursued with greater or lesser success” (1971, 271). With this instruction in mind, the case studies focus first on geographic and social contexts through similarities within a particular socio-phenomenological region, providing internal comparative cases while building across chapters a strong measure of comparison, and then consider the most recent trends in global sexual diversity politics, from marriage equality to education. In this section, for example, we see the impact of “backlash” against LGBT rights in Phillip Ayoub and David Paternotte’s chapter on Europe, Cai Wilkinson on post-Soviet states, and Javier Corrales on Latin America; the institutional arrangements that support or inhibit LGBT conceived rights in Miriam Smith’s chapter on anglophone democracies; and the links between state homophobia as a tool of reaction in Europe and Latin America, as well as Mehmet Sinan

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Birdal's exploration of politics in the Middle East and North Africa region and the chapter by Monica Tabengwa and Matthew Waites on sub-Saharan Africa. Cornel Grey and Nikoli A. Attai call our attention to race and persistent colonial structures in the dynamics of sexual and gender politics in the Caribbean, describing "blacklighting," through which dominant LGBT rights advocacy marginalizes black voices. Across such cases, global health politics scholar Jeremy Youde provides the links between HIV/AIDS as disease, the politics of prevention, and the globalization of LGBT norms, as well as resistances.

Manuela L. Picq's focus on indigenous sexual and gender identities as a case study—unusual in a text dedicated to contemporary global LGBT politics—suggests the global limits of our binary conceptualizations at the same time that progress is seen socially in binary terms and these binaries are increasingly contested, a construct Singh interrogates as well in the concluding section, while situating Julie Hollar's discussion of marriage in a comparative case chapter that includes an analysis of its consequences provides a critical prism through which we can better understand the origins and implications of homonormative politics.

In the concluding section, we offer a powerful critique—and in some chapters, a rebuke—of scholarship and activism embedded in the LGBT human rights model. (p. 10) Across these chapters, authors engage with and redirect our understanding of the LGBT framework, drawing out its geo-temporal specificity (Bosia); questioning the appropriateness of certain aspects of the model outside the West (Edenborg, Rahman, and Singh); turning the tables on our disciplinary bias to examine sexuality from the South (Nyeck); and interrogating the embeddedness of LGBT politics within empire, capitalism, and war (Stevens and Chaudhry) and within notions of modernity, progress, and neocolonial resistance (Rahman). These critical chapters call our attention to the local manifestation and construction of sexual and gender identities beyond the West, meaning beyond the global discourse of rights that seeks to conceptualize freedom through an LGBT lens. Moreover, the authors call on scholars and advocates to reconceive of global politics through a variety of practices responsive to lived experiences, as Momin Rahman does in terms of queer Muslims and Michael J. Bosia does through an analysis of capabilities in terms of social and sexual lives.

Conclusion

Despite our attempts, and the support of Oxford University Press for a handbook on the topic with twenty-eight chapters, we in no way suggest that we have exhausted the possibilities for examination. As Justin Perez points out in his chapter, local forms of LGBT self-conceptualization often trump even powerful national political imperatives, suggesting that regional and phenomenological studies embedded in national and transnational politics elide the intense variety of experiences in the local, where everyday lives are politically and socially constructed through local tools. Moreover, Dennis Altman provides a comprehensive reflection on the contributions to the volume in his concluding chapter by also pointing out gaps and, moreover, focusing our minds keenly on the relationship and

tensions between the kind of knowledge produced by academic work and the urgent needs of LGBT activism around the world.

Such localization and activist urgencies, in fact, underline one of the many challenges facing scholars addressing the experiences of sexual and gender minority migrants and internally displaced persons. For example, the literature from migration and asylum studies has not yet addressed the on-the-ground, day-to-day experiences of LGBT people as they flee from their home countries to reach host countries where they hope to file asylum claims. While we had hoped to include a chapter on the issues around migration, it became evident that it would not be possible to do so in this work. Nonetheless, we see in this volume the questions that can be raised—and the suggestion of questions yet to be raised—around such traumatic experiences. For example, literature has turned to the politics of destination countries as some states move to accept LGBT migrants; this work has pointed to the problematic nature of that engagement (Dawson and Gerber 2017). Others are interrogating the process and understandings of migration in general as norms are disrupted by sexual and gender minority displacement (Manalansan 2006). At the same time, a focus on the *local* calls attention to the ways that gender and (p. 11) sexual minorities in situ construct networks of support where they can live their lives in the fullest terms possible. However clandestine, situational, or scaled, such networks, including individual romantic relationships, friendships, house parties, celebrations, meeting places, and codes, provide opportunities for expression and self-conceptualization. Forced out of these networks by war or climate change or both, sexual and gender minorities lose even these tentative support systems and are plunged into communities and processes governed by, at least, familial assumptions, heterosexist policies and practices, and, at best, Western LGBT rights and identities of which they might not be aware. On the road, they are without their learned networks and absent the tools necessary to access or build new ones.

The critique of the LGBT rights model, the interrogation of the origins of LGBT politics, the emphasis on sexual and gender minority voices, and the alternatives arrayed as tools and strategies for mobilization in the handbook suggest possibilities for the study of refugee politics as well as the practice of aid. But it remains for others to offer a full elaboration of this work.

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