

Sex and Desire in Hong Kong

Petula Sik Ying Ho

and

A. Ka Tat Tsang



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Introduction

This collection of essays is an intellectual summary as well as my personal reflections on my journal publications in the past decade. Through the documentation of these journal articles that I have published individually and as a co-author with A. Ka Tat Tsang in the last decade or so, we hope to show how our viewpoints and constructs for making sense of sexuality have changed over the years. These changes in viewpoints show how we have responded to the different currents of thought regarding sexuality for the purposes of advancing studies in the field, creating new courses at the university level, and generating more space in the discussion of sex in academia and the wider community. These papers were published between 1995 and 2009, and engaged with a number of significant social changes, including the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1991, the transition of Hong Kong from the colonial to postcolonial period, the increasing prominence of the internet as a structure in our daily life, the increasingly nebulous nature of the political administrative border between Hong Kong and mainland China, the setting up of the Equal Opportunity Commission in 1996, the introduction of antidiscriminatory legislations,¹ and the dramatic demographic changes associated with low fertility, significant immigration and the influx of migrant workers. The changes in our writings reveal and illustrate social changes, trends, shifts, and processes in our particular geographical and social locations and in the movement across

1. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is an independent statutory body set up in 1996 to implement the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO), the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) and the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO). The EOC works towards the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability, family status and race.

these borders, thereby highlighting the reality of coloniality and how our experience of desire and sexuality is conditioned by broad global and sociopolitical forces.

Major self-corrections

The decade-and-a-half programme of research and scholarship documents professional and personal struggles. Sexuality researchers are ready, at least in theory, to examine how the acquisition and conceptualization of their professional knowledge are connected to their own personal life, including their social location, experience, relationships, sexuality, and the associated strivings and desires. This collection of essays is in part a career retrospective, but extends beyond it in that it weaves a thread through multiple social forces and intersecting intellectual themes that have been circulating in the past two decades. Tsang and I moved through the colonial-postcolonial transition, and extended our engagement with the queer community, moving beyond the confines of “Hong Kong Chineseness”. This allowed us to engage with the complex game of identification in a globalized environment and attempt to “queer” the heteronormal. Our personal lives, including our careers, relationships, and personal quests, also changed quite dramatically during this time frame. Our stories could be told in so many different ways, and it is our hope that this collection would be a helpful point of departure.

All of the studies we have documented in this volume are qualitative studies based on in-depth and focus group interviews. Our experiences with these individual and group interviews have transformed our understanding of an ever-evolving domain which we had once tried to capture with the Western language of sexuality, and have led us to rethink our theoretical positions and methods. Through listening to hundreds of men and women tell their stories, we have arrived at a better understanding of the value and significance of research that engages with people’s articulation of their lived experiences, even when they sometimes contradict the researcher’s original positions, assumptions and arguments. These experiences and reflections have led to important changes in our scholarship. Thus, we offer the following supplements:

Initially, we had adopted Grosz and Probyn (1995)’s definition of sexuality in four ways: (1) as a drive; (2) as an act; (3) as an identity; and (4) as an orientation, position and desire (1994, viii). Gradually, we found that such a framework could not adequately address the less visible, unconscious and

bodily experiences in sexual encounters and associated experiences. The word “sexuality” itself, in fact, was never used by our informants. How did the informants talk about their sexual experiences? It was found that what they included in their narratives did not fit neatly into the usual conceptual categories. The young women, for example, reported a rich array of activities and experiences, such as watching an exhibitionist, seeing their parents make love, noticing the erected penis of their cousin, uncle or father, and playing with condoms and using them as water balloons. Desire, therefore, seems to be the better entry point in exploring the wider picture of what men and women want, their needs, and what they are comfortable and uncomfortable in verbalizing. We also found that there are advantages in using the English word and theoretical concepts of “desire”, which is usually translated as *yu* (慾) in Chinese. *Yu* means the desire for physical, sensory or emotional satisfaction. It can sometimes be used interchangeably with the word *qing* (情). *Qing* refers to love, emotions, feelings, and relationships that are associated with *yu*. In the study of *si-nais* (middle-aged housewives), it is more relevant to use the word *yu* than “sexuality” to conceptualize their experiences. The *si-nais* were, for the most part, not keen to talk about sexual behaviours, but they were willing to talk about wants and desires that seemed to imply the English term “sexual” in a broad sense. These married women talked about their flirtatious relationships with restaurant head waiters, erotic experiences with their ballroom dancing tutors and their partners with whom they had bonded as fellow Cantonese opera enthusiasts, as well as imaginary love relationships with actors in Korean soap operas.

Second, we would like to caution against the unquestioned privileging of elite discourses produced and disseminated from sites of power and against the risk of theoretical imperialism. In the early 1980s, the professional scientific language we used, when we first took up research into issues relating to homosexuality, was presented as being value-free and politically neutral. We were among the first to point this out in our advocacy work, especially as we knew that when the professional community speaks on the topic of sexuality, the public often assumes that its utterances are grounded in superior knowledge. In the area of sexuality, professional discursive practices have fuelled major political and social movements inspired and informed by Marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism and critical theory. Such professional discourse usually articulates powerful claims contradicting society’s sometimes flawed understanding of the nature of knowledge and how knowledge comes about. However, we were

not critical enough when we first started to engage in these discussions. Through our empirical studies, we have come to notice that, “whenever the elite discourse fails to fully represent the lived experiences of ‘the people,’ the utterances of our research participants demonstrate the creative and subversive potentials of the everyday language” (Tsang & Ho, 2007). We thus have to listen to what our research participants have to say and attend to the everyday language they use to help us reformulate our ideas as well as conceptual and methodological tools.

Thanks to these challenges, we have become more aware of the importance of addressing issues concerning the relationship between the researcher and the group that is being studied. Transparency, power, and who has control over the agenda are more important issues than, for example, whether researchers or participants themselves are gay, straight, married or unmarried. We have also developed a greater interest in collaborative research and in exploring new ways to become more self-reflective—this latter part being a learning process important for developing new ways of engaging with our research participants. Thus we started off with an expert-objective research position, but then moved towards greater involvement of our research participants, which led to the production of documentary films and other means of enabling their voices to be heard. We began by exploring alternative ways of gathering stories and deriving insight. As qualitative researchers, we launched the Research Grant Council-funded study—“The second spring: Roads taken and not taken by Hong Kong women in middle age”—in 2007, with an awareness of the importance of devising more varied and innovative empirical designs and of sharing our findings in more engaging, accessible ways. For this project, we decided to videotape all the interviewees rather than to rely on audiotaping, so as to produce a short film on the side. The filming of the interviews in the research participants’ homes and subsequent interviews in their neighbourhoods helped us see more clearly the possibilities, relevance and implications of an art-based inquiry approach to social studies. It is important to emphasize the authority of *both* the researcher *and* the researched in creating meaning in a work of scholarly investigation. Now we are keen to embrace what is known as “schol-ARTistry” (Nielsen, 2005)—hybrid practices which combine tools used in the literary, visual, and/or performing arts with “scientific” tools used by educators and other social scientists, in order to understand the lived experience of our research participants.

We have had to experiment with different interview formats, which have helped us not only to focus on the content of the dialogue, but also on the context surrounding the act of storytelling itself. We have also shared our latest thoughts and encounters with different audiences throughout Asia by showing our short films. We see this as a way to stimulate dialogue about the generation of new knowledge through art-based approaches to scholarship, and to create new knowledge in the very process, drawing on the expertise of not just Western scholars but also Asian, and in particular, Chinese scholars.

For the above reasons, we find it pressing to challenge academic conventions and to explore other avenues to knowledge. We have each written from a personal standpoint a section below for this introduction. We believe that intellectual inquiry calls for an openness to the rethinking and reconstruction of one's understanding and educational practice in relation to one's ongoing academic development and life experiences. Theory building is connected intimately to the lives we live; our thinking and attitudes, subject to influence by personal experience, also change over time. Our personal experiences function as resources, rather than as a purely undesirable source of bias, informing and shaping our perception and understanding of issues under study. The changes and shifts in our perception and understanding illustrate the multidimensionality of sexuality and desire, as well as the necessity of approaching it through a myriad of modalities. These experiences also indicate possibilities of identity/being, resistance, subversion, and change.

Self-confession by Sik Ying Ho

In all the years that I have partaken in sexuality studies, and especially in the study of male homosexuality, I have often been questioned about my motivations—as a woman—for researching these topics. In the early years I felt quite uncomfortable being challenged by the gay community as to how it would be possible for an outsider like me to write justly, and I was often at a loss for a response. Sometimes I felt offended by such suspicious attitudes, since I did not think that only gay people are entitled to study gay issues. My standard reply would be that having people approach the issues from different angles is advantageous for the advancement of scholarship. On the other hand, I believed that the challenges of the gay community were legitimate; therefore, in circumstances when I felt secure, I would describe my position in greater detail. I would explain how I wished I were not impelled so much to investigate

homosexuality, but that it was my attempt to heal a personal wound through knowledge, since I had a personal history with gay men that I needed to come to terms with. The reasons for my research, of course, were missing from the journal articles that I published, but they were strong enough to compel me to take on this topic and to drag A. Ka Tat Tsang, my final-year field supervisor, colleague and longstanding comrade, on board with me.

In 1988, one of my friends, Wong Yiu Ming, came out as gay. His coming out prompted me to choose for my Master of Social Sciences dissertation the topic "A study of interpersonal relationships of male homosexuality" (Ho, 1990). Wong Yiu Ming was the first gay person I had known in my life. That there was such a thing as homosexuality intrigued me. Concurrently, there was a wider discussion going on in Hong Kong regarding the proposed decriminalization of homosexual behaviour. I perceived that there was considerable discrimination in society against gay men, even among the so-called "democrats" or "liberals". The fact that a good friend of mine was gay made me want to do something on the academic front to make Hong Kong a more accepting society for gay individuals. I decided to further my studies in this field. The first academic article that I wrote on male homosexuals was published in 1995 in the *Journal of Homosexuality* and was based on my earlier Master's thesis, in which I documented the discussion in relation to the decriminalization of male homosexuality in Hong Kong.

In June 1990, in the discussion regarding adopting a Bill of Rights for Hong Kong, the British government brought up the issue of decriminalizing homosexuality to the colonial administration's executive committee, urging it to draft and amend laws for compatibility with the Bill of Rights. A motion debate on decriminalization was held in July. The legislative council finally voted in favour of decriminalizing homosexual acts between consenting adults in private. The arguments for moral and social charges against homosexuals had been, and still is to a degree, based on the claim that such behaviour is against nature, and that it threatens the existing social and moral order, particularly in a predominantly ethnic Chinese community such as Hong Kong. Legislative councillor and businessman Mr Ngai Shiu-kit, opposing decriminalization, said that any homosexual act should be punished "because it went against traditional Chinese ethics and would result in the spread of AIDS". Another legislative councillor, Mr Cheung Chi-kong (who was also a secondary school principal) said, "[Homosexuality] is a deviant behaviour . . . the act itself is not natural and should not be acceptable" (*South China Morning Post*, 13 June 1990).

In the process of writing up the dissertation, I also discovered that my boyfriend was gay and that he had a Caucasian boyfriend who was much older. In my desperation to understand why he would choose to love a Western man rather than me, I delved into the *Politicization of identity: The decriminalization of homosexuality and the emergence of gay identity in Hong Kong* with a focus on interracial relationships in my PhD dissertation (Ho, 1997). In my interviews of Hong Kong gay men with Western partners, I noticed how there was a decline in the social status of Westerners in the gay community and how there was a new awareness among Chinese gay men of the importance of being less subservient in their relationships with white men. My examiners thought it was an excellent thesis. However, there were criticisms from my gay friends and from some research participants concerning the study's obvious omission of the actual sexual practices employed by gay men. I decided to fill this research gap by interviewing the research participants again on their sex lives. However, when I submitted my manuscript to the journal *Sexualities*, I was questioned as to why I had not included the views of the interviewees' Caucasian partners. This was something I had to later amend. A manuscript on the negotiation of anal intercourse in interracial relationships in Hong Kong (Ho & Tsang, 2000a) was finally published in 2000. Another article on the proliferation of gay identities in Hong Kong (Ho & Tsang, 2000b) was published as a chapter in the book *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis* (Howarth et al., 2000), edited by my PhD supervisor, Dr Aletta Norval, and my friends at the University of Essex.

These two articles, which I have included in this book, were very important for my career. Although I had already published two articles on the topic before, one on the social construction of male homosexuality (Ho, 1995) based on my Master's dissertation and another one based on my clinical experience in counselling a gay man and his mother (Ho, 1999), the arduous tasks of finding the right venues for publication and revising and fine-tuning the Master theses into journal articles were highly memorable. The learning experience greatly enhanced my intellectual development.

Together with the other articles which I wrote in the subsequent years, these works show how the sexual landscape of Hong Kong has changed over the years. Although the accusation that homosexuals deviate from the perceived traditional gender and sex roles in a social and familial structure has remained unchanged, homosexuality is no longer such a taboo subject. There has been a popularization of the word "homosexual" and an emergence of gay identity in Hong Kong. The emotive complications concomitant with a discourse on sex

seem to have become less intense, too. It is difficult to conclude whether this is great progress, but it is definitely progress.

After ten years of studying male homosexuality, I noticed the emergence of new scholars, such as Travis Kong and others, in the study of male homosexuality. I felt inclined to broaden my scope of concern to exploring women's lives. As a single woman, I was also interested in "the road not taken", which spurred me to investigate the lives of married women. There are still people who argue that it is better for married women and mothers to be researchers of their own demographic group, rather than for single women like myself to do so. However, I felt ready to challenge this "membership" assumption as a result of my prior experience investigating gay sexuality as a heterosexual woman. In fact, the married women themselves showed little concern whether I was married or not. It is worthwhile here to point out that every academic and every writer has his/her own personal battle to fight. It is no wonder that we are often at places which others may think are not the best places for us to be. It is an established fact in the field that social scientists are usually involved in studying "the other". What is sometimes glossed over is how an outsider's position—for me, as non-gay and unmarried—might actually bring new dimensions to the study, aiding the researcher in eliciting information through questions that may seem too obvious or even naïve to insiders. The self-reflections involved have also pushed me to rethink issues of self-reflexivity in qualitative research.

Personal note by A. Ka Tat Tsang

Writing about sexuality has always been both difficult and enjoyable.

First, the language of sexuality was not part of the language world that I grew up in. I grew up in colonial Hong Kong, and we spoke Cantonese at home. The current Chinese translation of the word "sex" was rarely used in everyday discourse until the 1980s; even now, scholars and translators struggle to translate the word "sexuality", although I did attempt to offer a translation back in 1990—as 性本質 (*xing ben zhi*) (Man, Tsang, & Ng, 1990). I was perhaps among those who had helped to popularize the use of the Chinese word for sex in Hong Kong in the 1980s through my extensive involvement in public debates, advocacy, and media exposure, including a TV sex education docudrama series. Readers will see how the issue of language and translation comes up all the time in this collection. Ho has already touched on this in her introduction.

The language game bilingual Hong Kong people engage in is a phenomenon worthy of sociolinguistic inquiry in its own right. It is not uncommon for us to speak in Cantonese and substitute keywords in English. This hybrid language is an amazing colonial product, and provides a substratum for our discourses. This is also the language Ho and I use when we are not presenting at conferences or teaching academic courses. It is important to note that the majority of Hong Kong people do not speak English fluently, and this tendency to insert English keywords is somehow directly proportional to the speaker's fluency in the English language. When Ho and I discussed such issues in relation to sex and sexuality, we have played around with different Chinese words such as *yu* (慾), meaning "desire" and *qing* (情), which can be loosely translated as passion (Tsang, 1986). Words like "eros" and the "erotic," which are difficult to translate into Chinese, have also been useful in some contexts. We are aware of the fact that within the English language itself, the lexicon of sexuality and desire is drawn from multiple etymological sources. It was therefore amusing for us to read Van Gulik's (1961/2002) class text on ancient Chinese sexual life and note how he switched into Latin in his narratives when he found the content too explicit.

This exploration into the language used for things sexual or erotic drew my attention to the realm of the unspeakable. I was drawn by the extent that much of people's lived experiences relating to the sexual or the erotic is not spoken about, and how the process of speaking and writing about it always remain constrained in some ways. I felt this even though I had spoken and written on the topic in various languages and genres to serve different personal and social purposes. I must also first admit that being able to enjoy sex, however this is understood, is often at the centre of my concern; and I do not think that everything has to be articulated in order to be enjoyed. I do, however, appreciate how the inability to articulate one's preferences and reflections on the topic can compromise one's sexual or erotic well-being. Projects on talking and writing about sexuality are, therefore, often attended with ambivalence. Like Ho, people have routinely inquired as to why I study my chosen subject of sex, though when they don't care to be polite about it, they just query whether it is an obsession. If there is anything to be obsessed with however, I think sex is a pretty good choice since an active and gratifying sex life is associated with health and well-being, well into old age. In reality, my interest and "obsession" started with my own struggles with sexual desire when I was younger. These desires were regulated by perverse missionary religions, which had co-opted and appropriated

the authority of Chinese tradition (Man, Tsang, & Ng, 1990; Tsang 1986); and as mentioned above, sex was not part of the everyday discourse with which I grew up. My education and family upbringing combined the conservatism of both Christianity and the patriarchal culture typical of rural communities in South China. It was only later as a student in the 1970s that I learned about the exciting ideas and clinical practices around sex that had been brewing and proliferating in the major urban centres of Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin since the beginning of the twentieth century.

I had firsthand experience living in a cultural environment where sex was not talked about directly, but was constantly referred to indirectly. It was almost always cast in a negative frame, and sexual interest was associated with moral inferiority and a negative aesthetic value. I am therefore thankful that both my grandmother and my father violated some widely held social norms in their times, in that their experiences allowed me to understand the almost inevitable discrepancy between what people say and do in the realm of eros and desire. What most of us consider hypocrisy may well be an effective strategy of sexual being.

Growing up subscribing to conservative sexual values was a constant source of inner tension. When intense sexual or erotic drives are suppressed, the result is an estranged and distorted self, not to mention suffering from the frustration and agony of deprivation. My own liberation came with my study of clinical psychology. The clients I saw in psychotherapy were often my best mentors. Their struggle with disciplinary practices *à la* Foucault, and their resilience, honesty, and courage helped me tremendously in my own journey towards understanding my own sexual and erotic being, and how I was once trapped in many unquestioned or taken-for-granted notions. On numerous occasions, I was humbled by their diverse adventures and candid reflections.

The journey I have taken with these individuals has also fostered my sense of skepticism. While some of the clients I work with are highly educated, many of them have not been exposed to the social theories, or the feminist and queer articulation that have become a convention of academic discourse in the social sciences and humanities. Yet they have nonetheless overcome major barriers and debilitating circumstances in becoming who they are. I have always questioned the role and the value of academic knowledge in the lives of these people, and I am conscious of how knowledge production in academia interfaces with the lived experience of everyday life.

When I matriculated at university in 1973 in Hong Kong, less than two percent of the people in my age bracket had access to university education. The elite educational policy reinforced the highly hierarchical colonial order. As a beneficiary of that system, it took me a while to realize how my social position conditioned my thinking and practice in the area of understanding sexuality. I first gained a public voice as a clinical psychologist in the late 1970s, when there were only less than twenty of us for a population of six million. That special status allowed me to begin advocating for gay rights as an authoritative mental health professional. A few years later I started teaching at the University of Hong Kong, the most prestigious institute of higher education in the colony. It was easy to have multiple platforms for my views, and to gain media exposure when I wanted to. In the 1980s, I was embroiled in multiple public controversies related to the feminist standpoint, gay rights, trans issues, pornography, an alternative lifestyle later referred to as polyamoury, sex education, and so on. I had a “voice”, but was not fully aware of how it was constructed and positioned. Mr Lam Hon-kin, better known as “Uncle Kin”, the office assistant at the University of Hong Kong’s Department of Social Work and Social Administration, used to say to me, “when you read or watch pornography, it is research; and when you say something related to sex, it is academic. When I do the same thing, it is just perverted (鹹濕 in Cantonese).” Uncle Kin’s comment is one of the most sobering reminders of the need to negotiate the interface between elite discourse and everyday life.

My academic work on sexuality composes part of my life, and is intimately tied to how I manage my sexual or erotic life and being. In a way I am seeking a more open space for myself and for the people I know and care about. Therefore, I critique the desexualizing discourses found in everyday life and the various forms of social regulation and discipline. Academic writing is in fact one such forms of discipline, as it imposes unwritten but established restrictions on what can and cannot be written. Writing under the constraints of such discipline can be limiting; for this, I am glad that both Ho and I have found other platforms to express our views and share our experiences.

I am thankful for the kind of life I live, with all its sexual and erotic content. Even when I was going through the tough transition of being a new immigrant in Canada, where I was stripped of the privileges I once had, I was able to celebrate my desire, eros, and sexuality. Life would have been much more miserable otherwise. I am conscious of the fact that I am among the privileged few in this regard. I have been trying hard to address the issue of erotic justice and

equity. In my view, people should be able to enjoy sex as part of life, and as part of being human. Depriving people of the opportunity to enjoy sex and be who they are sexually is a very horrific form of oppression. My own involvement in human service, social work, and psychotherapy is also grounded on this view.

The publication of this collection gives me tremendous joy despite its limitations, in that we are able to engage with a broader audience, and set the agenda anew. It is hoped that concurrent publishing in English and Chinese will allow our ideas to be shared, questioned, and critiqued by a much more diverse range of people with varied views and experiences. The dialogue of opinions has been central to the development and molding of our individual viewpoints over the years. Needless to say, it is wonderful to be able to write relatively freely, without having to give undue consideration to critiques from our reviewer colleagues. Having the opportunity to write this introductory note, which Ho considers confessional, is a real pleasure and privilege. The Chinese version of this collection contains a different personal note of reflection. I hope readers will enjoy this volume as much as I do.

Rethinking self-reflexivity

With these self-confessions and personal accounts, I hope our work can contribute to the growing body of work advocating self-reflexivity in qualitative research and sexuality scholarship. My dialogue with Tsang on this topic is documented below. Self-reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's role(s) in the construction of the research problem, setting, and findings as well as highlights the importance of the researcher's becoming consciously aware of these factors and thinking through the implications of such for his/her research. Listening and writing with reflexivity are often described as tools to help situate oneself and achieve cognizance of the ways personal history influences the research process, thus yielding more "accurate" and more "valid" research (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Ball, 1990). In our experience, we do not usually claim accuracy and validity, as we are fully aware of how our participants' accounts are reconstructed by the intellectual tools and theoretical structures we employ. To be reflexive, then, not only contributes to producing knowledge that aids in understanding and gaining insight into the workings of our social world, but also provides insight on how this knowledge is produced (McCarthy, 1994; Hertz, 1997; Davies, 1999). Here, we are particularly concerned with how self-reflexivity may result in a simple identifying of oneself or a telling of

a confessional tale, which certainly continues to work to identify and define the “other”, and how self-reflexivity is often used to situate oneself as closer to the subject. This can lead to a specific form of self-reflexivity—a reflexivity that falls into seeking similarities between the researcher and the subject, a form that seeks to make “your” self closer to “your” subject. This desire to be close to the subject, to write ourselves as close to our subjects, and to “affirm oneness” (Patai, 1991, p. 144) may include such strategies as the author using his/her own life experiences to find similarities with the research subject(s). As Iris Marion Young (1997) notes, “we often think that understanding another person’s point of view or situation involves finding things in common between us” (p. 52). We recall, often with mixed feelings, how we were touched, moved, challenged, and disturbed by our participants’ narratives. As partially documented in *Lost in Translation* (Tsang & Ho, 2007), our reflection led to our critical appraisal of the elite discursive structures we used, and to the appreciation of the role of everyday language, which is what connects us with our participants. This shared language helps to construct and sustain a shared world, within which meanings are derived or made. Thus, self-reflexivity is not just about indulging in self-confession, but to question our assumptions, and to be as Gayatri Spivak (1984–85) states, “vigilant about our practices” (p. 184). This vigilance from within can aid us to rethink and question the assumptive knowledge embedded in reflexive practices in ethnographic and qualitative research. It can also prevent reflexivity from becoming merely a confessional act, a cure for personal ailments, or a practice that renders familiarity. Instead, practices of reflexivity can be situated in a position critical to exposing the difficult and often uncomfortable task of leaving what is unfamiliar, unfamiliar (Pillow, 2003).

Feminist theory and feminist researchers have furthered discussions of reflexivity by situating reflexivity as primary to feminist research and methodology (Clough, 1992; Fonow & Cook, 1991). Reflexivity under feminism is not only about investigating the power structure inherent in one’s research but also about doing research differently. The need to do research differently arises from the ethical and political problems and questions raised by feminists about traditional research methods (Oakley, 1981). One example of a novel research approach is a focus upon developing reciprocity with research subjects through hearing and listening with the goal of equalizing the research relationship—doing research “with” instead of “on”. Inspired by these practices in the field of feminism, we have kept pondering the following questions: How can we

deconstruct the author's authority in the research process? How can we be less exploitative researchers in the way we work with our research participants, colleagues and research assistants? How can we find new ways of generating research that is useful and empowering to the research participants?

With these questions in mind and the recognition that research subjects (both the researcher and the researched) are subjects who are multifaceted and complex with many different layers, we have taken on the challenge of rethinking our research methods, methodologies, and writing strategies so as to reflect such complexity. Practices in self-reflexivity have led to "textual reflexivity" practices (Macbeth, 2001), which attempt to address and at times problematize the work of writing representations and encourage the creation of "multivocal" texts to let the data and the subjects speak for themselves. Researchers have tried to accomplish this through different styles of writing and representation, including writing data as plays, literary narratives, or split multivoiced texts (Eisner, 1997; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Richardson, 1994; Sanders, 1999, Canhman & Taylor, 2008).

In the past few years, I have diversified my research presentation methods to include media other than print. The *22 Springs* DVD (Ho & Mok, 2011), containing thirty documentary films based on our research interviews from the project "The second spring: Roads taken and not taken by middle aged women in Hong Kong", demonstrates our revision of our own epistemological and methodological positions as a result of prolonged engagement with our research participants as subjects-cum-coproductors of knowledge. Through documentary filming, we demonstrate the different ways of producing knowledge. These include:

- (1) The adoption of auto-ethnography. The two films, *Marriage as Package Tour* and *24*, show how we can foreground the researcher both as subject and object of study and analysis. We also show how the researcher's personal history and experiences as well as dialogues with research participants are legitimate sources of knowledge.
- (2) The engagement of research participants in conferences. The film *Conference as Feminist Ethnography*, for example, shows different possible methods of organizing academic conferences. In 2009, we invited the protagonists of the films in *22 Springs* to the "Women Writing New Scripts Conference" to dialogue with local and overseas academics, so that these research participants do not remain as mere pseudonyms

- in journal articles. The dialogues produced useful knowledge about Hong Kong Chinese women as well as generated invaluable insights for research.
- (3) The reconfiguration of our relationship with research “assistants” who are co-workers in knowledge production (through the setting up of The Sik Ying Ho & Jolene Mok Productions). This gives voice to the research assistants whose points of view are often missing in the research process and products.
 - (4) Documenting the research process as a way of producing knowledge. The four films in the Ugly Betty series, including *Betty in Paris*, *Betty in Milan*, *The Comfort of Strangers* and *Good Morning, Class!*, show how we can use the reflections of a research team as a way of producing knowledge.

In other words, we did not perform such exercises to increase the validity, trustworthiness, or authority of our own voice. Instead, we wished to make our own deliberations and articulations on our research experience available for the critical scrutiny of a wider audience.

Sexuality in Hong Kong

Weston’s resistance to the marginalization of sexuality and its segregation or ghettoization as a “disciplinary subfield” has encouraged us to widen the social space for the discussion of sexuality by looking at issues of migration, labour, kinship, nationalism, reflexivity, theory, and a host of what social scientists call “broader” topics (1998, p. 26). It is perhaps still true that there is a segregation of eroticism in both the intellectual history of the social sciences and within ostensibly “larger” themes of social science inquiry” (1998, p. 3); however, we are glad to see that some form of reordering has taken place in the past decade.

I am also glad to see that some changes have occurred in the academic world and in the community in relation to the study of gender and sexuality. This has been largely thanks to the efforts of scholars and activists, as well as to those of marginalized groups. Social work is an interdisciplinary subject with a pragmatic focus and an explicit value base. However, it has a second-class status within academia and institutions of knowledge. Sexuality, too, is a marginalized subject. I have experienced many obstacles—due to power and other systemic issues as well as the limited availability of resources—on the way to

crafting a space for the discussion of gender and sexuality in academia and the community. It is always difficult to get funding for sexuality studies, and especially for qualitative studies. Most of these studies have been conducted with the support of small project grants (less than HK\$50,000). I conducted most of the interviews myself, and I had to be hands-on, extremely flexible and strategic, in order to set up university courses on gender and sexuality. This was necessary for the nurturing of postgraduate research students, to promote discussions and research in the area. I hope to see a movement in both social work and sexuality studies from the margins to the centre in the years to come.

This collection of articles is about the lived experiences of Chinese people in Hong Kong. In my research projects with Tsang, we invited groups of Chinese people to talk about their relationships as well as their “sexual” experiences. We hope to situate the collection within the context of globalization. Overall, everything we touch on nowadays needs a wider and deeper analysis, in order to place sexualities within a wide variety of different and changing, but intermingling, cultures. The rich, postmodern, cosmopolitan male gay world exemplifies the changes under globalization, and in studying it, our attention has been drawn to the importance of the internet, dance parties and hybrid identities. So too does the present world of housewives exemplify it. What housewives do for leisure and self-development, from calligraphy to Ikebana, ballroom dancing and handicrafts, to various types of adult education courses, has thus become an important subject of research.

Readership and relevance

One question Tsang and I have had to face is: in what ways is this book relevant to the English-speaking world? How is Hong Kong relevant? In some ways, this question is an oppressive and disempowering one, as we know the answer is in large part dependent on Hong Kong’s position in the geopolitical order. With the growing importance of mainland China, Hong Kong has lost prominence in status. I have therefore had to convince others that the study of Hong Kong still holds great relevance: as a Chinese city with a colonial history, it is a useful entry point for understanding China. We ultimately hope to produce a contingent understanding of Chinese culture which can be accessed through the particular case of Hong Kong. However, we hope to also pose a critique and go beyond self-orientalization and self-exoticization (Tsang et. al, 2008).

Another question is: why English? English continues to have a cultural and linguistic hegemony in academia. However, with the global power shifts, we are sure that changes in power relations will be reflected in academia. This book project is a product of this transition.

Besides this English edition, we will publish a Chinese edition in mainland China. The Chinese edition is a translation, or to be more exact, a rewriting (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990) of the English version. While they are not exactly identical in the collection of papers included, as we have left out some articles originally published in Chinese in this English version, we have tried to make sure that they are largely similar in their aims and styles.

We have been colonial subjects, in the sense of having been British colonial subjects and cultural subjects of both the West and modern China. Our colonial experience has therefore served as an entry point of discussion. There are obvious limitations to any pretension of presenting a “global” perspective, as we have little knowledge of Hispanic, Arabic, African realities and so on; but we hope to substantiate transnational discourse.

Substantive scope

Any organization of the content areas is bound to have its shortcomings. I have tried to provide signposts and coordinates for readers by organizing our writings into four clusters: (1) Body, (2) Identity, (3) Relationships, and (4) Desire.

I see a few threads running through these clusters: (1) our experience of coloniality, which is intimately tied to global power dynamics as well as the intersecting categories of race, gender, sexual orientation, and class; (2) trespass/transcendence of material and symbolic borders or space (i.e., divisions between East/West, colonizer/colonized, elite/oppressed, genders, sexual orientations, academic/lay); (3) negotiating multiple contingencies in the human life-world when deviating from linear categorical thinking—that is, how we deal with complexity, fragmentation and contradictions and attempt to make sense through assimilation and integration.

This book is an interim summary of Tsang’s and my own life and work over the last few decades. We are looking forward to further learning and development in the future, with great anticipation that these journeys will also be accompanied with joy, love and hope.

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