

**WEDNESDAY 14 APRIL 2021, 09:30 - 10:30**

## **Families and Relationships Stream Plenary**

### **BODIES OF THEORY AND EMBODIED INTIMACIES: EXPANDING THE CRITIQUE OF HETEROSEXUALITY BEYOND PAROCHIAL WESTERN PREOCCUPATIONS**

**Stevi Jackson**

*(University of York)*

Within western sociology over the last few decades there has been an emphasis on the loosening of normative constraints on intimate relationships, the diversity of familial and intimate relationships and practices and the increased visibility of forms of sexuality that transgress, subvert or unsettle heterosexual norms. At the same time the sociological lens has been applied to the institution and practice of heterosexuality. Even while emphasising diversity, theoretical and empirical work on social change and intimate relationships has remained Eurocentric. In the context of recent challenges to the parochialism of western theory more generally, this presentation will consider how we might widen the scope of our concerns and stretch our sociological imaginations. Drawing on East Asian examples and taking my own past analysis of heterosexuality as a framework (Jackson 2006; 2018; 2019), I will consider how the analysis of heterosexuality could benefit from widening its scope beyond the current Eurocentric focus (and universalising claims made on the basis of local conditions in western societies). It cannot be assumed that what we identify as heterosexuality is everywhere the same. Heterosexuality may be ubiquitous, the normative way of doing sexuality and forming relationships in most of the world, but it is far from monolithic. The ways in which it is regulated and practised, as well as how it is accorded social significance and personal meaning, vary both within and between social contexts.

**Stevi Jackson** is Professor of Women's Studies at the University of York, UK. Her research interests centre on the sociology of gender, sexuality and intimate relationships. She is the author of a number of books including *Heterosexuality in Question* (1999) and co-author, with Sue Scott, of *Theorizing Sexuality* (2010), and with Momin Rahman, of *Gender and Sexuality: Sociological Approaches* (2010). Her most recent book, co-authored with Petula Sik Ying Ho, is *Women Doing Intimacy: Gender, Family and Modernity in Britain and Hong Kong* (2020). She has also co-edited a number of collections including, with Sue Scott, *Gender: A Sociological Reader* (2002) and with Liu Jieyu and Woo Juhyun, *East Asian Sexualities: Intimacy, Modernity and New Sexual Cultures* (2008). She has published numerous chapters and articles on sexuality, family relationships and feminist sociological theory and recently, with Petula Sik Ying Ho and Sui-Ting Kong, on the consequences of Hong Kong's political turbulence for personal relationships and on the politics of sexuality in China. She is co-editor of two international book series, 'Sexuality, Gender and Culture in Asia' (with Denise Tang and Olivia Khoo) for Palgrave and 'Gender and Sociology' (with Sue Scott) for Bristol University Press, and co-editor (with Petula Sik Ying Ho) of a special issue of the *Journal of Gender Studies*, 'Sexual Politics and Gendered Lives: East Asian Perspectives,' due for publication in 2021.