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DIANE
RICHARDSON

Q and A with noted author, researcher, and
CSW Visiting Scholar

DIANE RICHARDSON

DIANE RICHARDSON is a CSW Visiting Scholar for Fall 2014 and a Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellow and Professor of Sociology in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology at Newcastle University, UK. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on sexuality, gender, citizenship and social justice. Her latest book *Sexuality, Equality and Diversity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) focusses on LGBT equalities policy, examining what has been achieved by legislation and resistance to such developments. She also recently co-edited *Intersections Between Feminist and Queer Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and *Contesting Recognition: Culture, Identity and Citizenship* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). With Victoria Robinson she is currently co-editing a 4th edition of *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). She also co-edits Palgrave's *Genders and Sexualities in the Social Sciences* (GSSS) Book Series with Robinson. She is also the author/editor of ten

other books, and numerous journal articles and book chapters.

Richardson's pioneering research on gender, sexuality, and citizenship has raised questions about how citizenship is understood. This theoretical work underpinned two large Economic and Social Research Council UK-funded studies concerned with the demands for rights from different minority groups. One of these was a study of recent sexualities equalities initiatives in the UK (<http://research.nc.ac.uk/selg/>); the other was an examination of gender inequalities and citizenship issues in Nepal for post-trafficked women.

Richardson is now working on a project called "Transforming Citizenship: Sexuality, Gender and Citizenship Struggles." The focus of this project is to explore how models of citizenship are constructed and deployed by marginalized groups as new democratic moments emerge. Recently, she kindly agreed to talk with us about her work.

What drew you to women's studies and sociology? Were you raised as a feminist? What were your early influences?

I grew up in a small rural village in the North of England until I went to university in Cambridge. My mother and her friends were an influence in that they were the generation Betty Friedan talked of in terms of experiencing "the problem that has no name." More positively it was at university where I found a name for what I felt were social injustices against women that I could see happening everyday around me. The women's liberation movement had emerged a few years before and at University I joined women's groups, went on protest marches, read *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir and other feminist books and never really looked back. I actually did chemistry at university but changed to psychology in my final year. My interests were in child psychology and the development

of gender and sexual identity and what was then called “sex-roles.” A lot of this work was being done in sociology and I gradually shifted across. Women’s studies came later but it followed from my feminist politics and studies. At the University of Sheffield where I was working in the 1990s, Vicki Robinson and I established an undergraduate degree in Women’s Studies, one of the first in the country, which attracted many students to the course. Though we no longer work in the same institution, Vicki and I have continued to work together and are currently editing a book together.

How did you become interested in studying citizenship issues? Can you explain the concept of sexual citizenship?

As a feminist I have long been sceptical of citizenship as a means for delivering social justice. Yet in my research on the politics of sexuality and gender I have found myself more and more engaged with the concept(s) of citizenship. Why? Since the 1990s, which also saw the development of queer theory and politics, there has been a “turn to citizenship” as the dominant discourse of sexual politics. Rather than critiquing social institutions and practices that have historically excluded them, over the last two decades, LGBT politics has increasingly been about seeking inclusion through demanding equal rights to citizenship.

The notion of “sexual citizenship” is relatively new and, in part,

reflects this “turn to citizenship” in sexual politics. It was in the 1990s that a literature that brought discourses of sexuality in conversation with discourses of citizenship emerged across a number of disciplines. Sexual citizenship is a multifaceted concept; understood in a variety of different ways. It can be used in both a narrow sense, to refer to rights granted or denied to various groups on the basis of sexuality—the right to marry or adopt children, for example—and in a much broader sense to refer to the underlying assumptions embedded in frameworks or models of citizenship and the practice of policy. This has been a key focus of my work, where I have sought to show how, despite claims to universality, normative assumptions about sexuality as well as gender underpin models of citizenship. My interest has been to develop critiques of the concept of citizenship itself, what you might call a queering of citizenship, opening up the possibility of transforming the norms of citizenship as a whole. Now we are at a point where I think we need to reflect on whether further revisioning is needed. Have these critiques gone far enough? We can think about this in a number of ways, for example by asking: In the light of social and legislative changes that have extended citizenship rights to (some) lesbians and gay men in many countries do the same arguments about the (hetero) sexualisation of citizenship still apply? Is sexual citizenship a distinctly western concept? These are some of the questions I am addressing

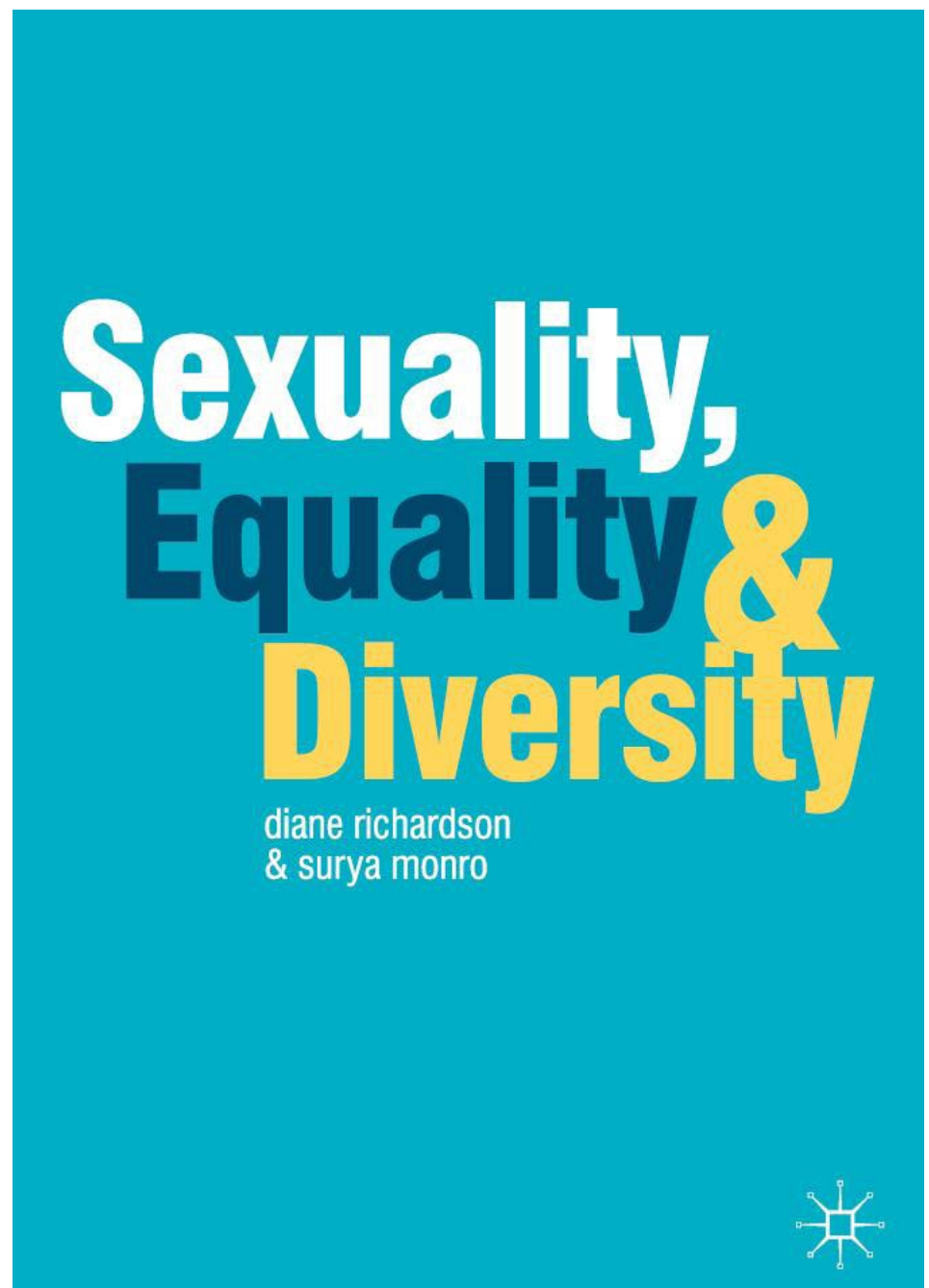
in my current work while I am at UCLA.

How did your research on HIV transmission and the Nepalese post-trafficking project affect your understanding of citizenship?

This follows on from my last point. I have recently been involved in a study in Nepal that extends feminist debates about sexual citizenship in interesting ways, in being based in the global south in a context where the focus is on being “non-citizens” rather than on being “beyond citizenship.” The focus of this research was to look at issues of gender, sexuality and citizenship in the context of the livelihood options available to women after leaving trafficking situations. This was an interdisciplinary project which I carried out with Nina Laurie, Meena Poudel, and Janet Townsend, colleagues at Newcastle University where I work in the UK, and Shakti Samuha the (then) only support organisation run by trafficked women for trafficked women in Nepal. A key aspect of this research was to gain knowledge that is grounded in the actual experiences of women themselves. This is important because the stigmatisation, poverty and social exclusion that women who have left trafficking situations typically encounter means they often have little voice in citizenship debates and pro-poor development policy making.

The project examined the processes whereby forms of sexualised and gendered stigma associated

with being seen as a “trafficked woman” shape access to citizenship rights. In some parts of the world rights are not conferred through the state but are governed through a person’s relationship with her or his local community or through kin relationships. After leaving trafficking situations, women are typically stigmatised (labelled as *prostitutes* and/or *HIV carriers*), and experience social rejection from their families and communities. Lacking family support makes it difficult for them to access citizenship and ensuing rights, as citizenship is conferred not at birth but after the age of 16 through the recommendation of a male relative; usually a girl’s father or husband. There are links here with the sexual citizenship literature. In Nepal citizenship remains legally and socially connected with normative assumptions about sexuality and gender: the construction of “the normal citizen” is grounded in specific notions of sexual citizenship, which makes the position of women leaving trafficking situations who are without citizenship on their return to Nepal very precarious. Without citizenship a woman is likely to have difficulty accessing government services, opening a bank account, obtaining a marriage certificate, finding a place to live, getting health care and education, skills training and waged employment. Not having a citizenship card also means a woman cannot vote or hold a legally valid passport, restricting travel for work or other purposes, and is unable to confer citizenship on her children. Not having a citizenship card also means a woman cannot transfer or



own property in her own name (www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk).

Can you tell about Sexuality, Equality, and Diversity? What specific areas did you look at to understand how equality policy has changed?

Sexuality, Equality and Diversity (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) is the title of my latest book, which I co-wrote with Surya Monro. It looks

at equality policy in relation to sexuality, examining what has been achieved by legislation and resistance to such developments and the implications for understandings of sexual citizenship. It grew out of a research project Surya and I did together, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, examining recent policy shifts in relation to sexualities equality and diversity in the UK context where demands have, to a degree,

Edited by
**Victoria Robinson
and Diane Richardson**

Introducing Gender and Women's Studies

THIRD EDITION



been answered via a raft of recent legislation including the Adoption and Children Act 2002, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, Gender Recognition Act 2004, the Civil Partnership Act 2004 and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. This was a study of the implementation of equalities initiatives in local government. Local govern-

ment provides a very useful lens through which to explore questions of everyday practices of tolerance and intolerance given that many of the people we interviewed were at the coal face of having to deal with and deliver recent equality measures in relation to LGBT people. We were actually keen to include local authorities that were resistant to equality measures, as

we wanted to consider not only implementation mechanisms that drive change, but also barriers and resistance to sexualities equalities work. This is important because the transformations in citizenship and wider social changes that have occurred in relation to LGBT people are viewed as a big success story. And of course in some ways these changes are a success story. However, it is also important to explore how this story translates at the level of everyday practice; what bound the limits to acceptance and tolerance. What we found was that there was an implementation gap, which threw a spotlight on where the sticking points are in the boundaries of tolerance/intolerance; acceptance/non-acceptance (<http://research.ncl.ac.uk/selg/>).

Can you tell us about Introducing Gender Studies? How has the volume changed since the first edition?

It is hard to believe, but the first edition of the book (co-edited with Victoria Robinson) was published over twenty years ago, in 1993, as *Introducing Women's Studies*. It was a great success and a second edition came out in 1997, followed by a third in 2008. A fourth edition will be published in 2015 by Palgrave Macmillan in the UK and New York University Press in the US. The fact that it has been in print so long is, I think, a testimony to the continued relevance of *Gender and Women's Studies*.

That said a lot has happened in that time in relation to Gender and

Women's Studies worldwide due to political, economic, social and cultural changes that have taken place. The books also mirror the changes that have taken place over the last two decades in the development of Gender and Women's Studies in academia. For instance, the third edition was retitled *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*, reflecting the shift from Women's Studies to Gender Studies that has taken place. It also incorporated new scholars and themes that have emerged over the years with a changing theoretical landscape that has seen innovative work emerge on identity, the body and embodiment, queer theory, technology, space, and the concept of gender itself as well as an increasing focus on sexuality, theorizing masculinities and (a key interest of mine) the intersections between feminist and queer theory. In addition, intersectional analyses have highlighted how meanings to the categories "women" and "men" are themselves constituted through their intersections with other forms of social differentiation such as race, ethnicity, age, sexuality and class; demonstrating how gender inequalities are related to other relations of power such as class inequalities, racism, ageism and social divisions associated with sexuality and dis/ability.

Alongside these developments there has emerged a view that gender equality has been achieved in many parts of the world, which has led to claims that we are now living in a "post-feminist" society where many of the issues that

feminists have highlighted are no longer relevant. Apart from feminist successes, the success of gender and women's studies in the academy is significant in this respect and in terms of gender having been "mainstreamed." While I would agree that there have been important advances in women's position in society, it is also clear that gender inequality persists. We are surrounded on a daily basis with examples that are testimony to the fact that gender is a key issue the world over. It is therefore perhaps no surprise that we can observe a revitalised interest in feminism emerging in many part of the world that challenges "post-feminist" accounts in highlighting the many and varied ways in which gender inequality remains a key issue on a global scale. This is something we talk about in the new edition, how the F (for feminism) word is back, so too is the S (for sexism) and the P (for patriarchy) word!

What are you working on while here at UCLA?

As well as completing the latest edition of *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*, I am working on "Transforming Citizenship: Sexuality, Gender and Citizenship Struggles," a project exploring how models of citizenship are constructed and deployed by marginalised groups as new democratic moments emerge. While I am at UCLA I am working on a book from the project that, through an examination of original research

findings from different parts of the globe, examines the construction of forms of citizenship for sexual and gender minorities. Some of the key questions addressed in the book are: Do new forms of sexual citizenship and democratisation of intimate life challenge broader theories of democracy and citizenship? Is this associated with new forms of social divisions and resistance to new forms of citizenship? How does the concept of citizenship deal with power, inequality and difference? What are the problems of framing struggles over belonging in terms of citizenship in a globalising world? Not easy questions to answer of course, but important ones to ask.

Diane Richardson will be giving a talk titled "Sexuality & Citizenship: Remaking Boundaries of Tolerance and Acceptance" on November 18 at 4 pm in Haines 279. The talk is cosponsored by the Gender Working Group of the Department of Sociology at UCLA and the UCLA Center for European and Eurasian Studies.