Transnational sexualities is a critical approach that focuses on the circulations of and connections between sexual discourses, practices, and subjectivities among and across national contexts. While the term transnational is frequently used to describe movement across national borders, we understand it primarily as a conceptual and methodological tool through which to engage sexual formations. What sets it apart from other approaches to sexuality is attention to transnational/global and national settings in which sexuality becomes imbued with meaning. Equally foundational to this approach is the view that sexuality is the terrain through which transnational/global hegemonies and national politics frequently take shape.

Transnational sexualities highlights questions of nationalisms, culture, capital, and globalization in producing sexuality, while seeking to dissolve existing boundaries and differences—between nations or religions, notions of modernity and tradition, hierarchies of progress and development, among others. It takes histories of colonialism, imperialism, and racialization as points of departure to trouble the persistence of legacies of sexual difference (for example, the dubious views that sexual rights are imperiled in countries like China, India and Turkey, but not in the US and Western Europe). It is alert to how sexual discourses were and are the vehicles through which colonial and imperial rule, colonial and postcolonial epistemologies and governance practices, and perhaps most egregiously, cultural and national differences could become normalized and naturalized.
Sustained attention to the imperatives of history and culture, in effect, attunes this approach to the pluralities and complexities of sexualities, sovereignties, and capital. It seeks to discern the dynamics of cultural meaning, cultural hybridities, national politics, circuits of transnational mobility, relationships between bodies and spaces, practices and behaviors, among other sites of sexuality that may simultaneously implicate hegemonies as well as forms of resistance.

Methodologically, a transnational sexualities’ approach is empirically located while being informed by broader historical, cultural, and political contexts. What distinguishes it is attention to connections across cultural settings. These connections may be implicit—for example, a project located in the present that is attentive to the impact of the past—or, more explicit—a project that brings two national contexts within the same analytical field. Such a transnational methodological approach differs from comparative sociology (for example, comparing sexual politics across two or more countries) due to a commitment to denaturalizing nationalisms and nations rather than reifying them (for example, highlighting the mutuality of sexualities and nationalisms across two or more contexts). Thus a transnational sexualities project may be empirically located in the specific setting of, say, the U.S. or Turkey, or in more than one place.

Transnational sexualities seeks to be epistemologically and ethically self-reflexive. Attention to what is authorized as knowledge, what counts as theory, the wisdom of conventional categories, and established methods of research are offset by a praxis of including diverse citations, decentering received categories, and striving toward collaboration with those who are the focus of research by seeing them as co-producers of knowledge and theory. It seeks to not only include those who are largely viewed as marginal as a result of their sexual, racial, gender, national, or class affiliations, for example, working class queer sexualities, but to “queer” the process of knowledge production by questioning the very categories, practices, and politics that produce these marginalities to begin with. As a result, transnational sexualities also remains vigilant toward academic practices that reproduce exclusions under the guise of rigor, the sociological canon, or institutional requirements.
LIST OF RESOURCES


Nagar, Richa. 2006. Playing with fire: feminist thought and activism through seven lives in India. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.


